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Familiar Essays

Familiar Essays

edited with introductions and notes

by

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Preface

IN BRINGING together the essays of the present collection, the editor has had in mind two chief purposes, which he hopes are not inconsistent with each other: to provide reading for a course in the history of the English essay, or for a course combining the study of composition and literature, in which the essay may serve as model and inspiration; and also to offer to the general reader a varied and representative selection from the best English essayists. To give greater coherence to the book, he has limited its scope to what is usually called the English familiar essay, though all three of these labels—"English," "familar," and "essay"—have been liberally interpreted. There is but a single deviation from the English field, however, to allow the inclusion of Montaigne, and this deviation probably needs no defense. Further, it seems fitting to use the qualitative rather than the quantitative test in deciding what may be called an essay, and to admit work that is so thoroughly in the spirit, if not the form, of the personal essay as the selections from *Religio Medici* and *Henry Ryecroft.*

Relatively much of the work of a comparatively small number of writers is presented, in the belief that emphasis upon the major essayists displays the best more satisfactorily than the alternative plan of including many authors with only an essay or two for each. In a few instances, however, single essays are presented, particularly when the importance of the writer in the historical development of the type seems to demand his inclusion. In choosing the essays which comprise the volume, the editor has attempted, wherever possible, to include several treatments of similar or identical themes; thus the reader may compare the ideas of Hazlitt, Stevenson, and Beerbohm on walking, and ob-

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serve the portraits of the traveler by Bacon and Overbury. Perhaps the editor may be permitted to say that he believes it has been possible to use this principle of selection, and at the same time do full justice to the varied possibilities, in form and subject, of the informal type of essay.

The introduction offers an attempt to limit the field of the essay and briefly sketches its general development in English literature, while emphasizing particularly the work of the familiar essayists. The aim of the headnotes is less to impart biographical information than to suggest to the reader a profitable way of approaching a given writer. Footnotes are appended where there appears an imperative necessity for them; foreign phrases, for example, are always translated, and words and allusions that would be likely to offer difficulty are defined or explained. In spelling and punctuation, the text of the earlier essays has been modernized wherever it seemed that to do so was to remove an unnecessary stumbling block for the reader.

A collection of this kind necessarily owes so much to previous editors and commentators that there is room for only a blanket acknowledgment of indebtedness. The editor would nevertheless like to express, if only in a general way, his debt to the several essay-anthologies and the many editions of individual essayists which he has consulted. The kind permission to reprint several of the selections, which has been accorded by Messrs. Doubleday, Doran and Co., E. P. Dutton and Co., W. W. Norton and Co., and Charles Scribner's Sons, is specifically acknowledged in footnotes to these essays.

S. R.

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Introduction

Introduction

THERE is usually considerable doubt as to what is meant when the term *essay* is used. Vagueness in defining a literary type is not, to be sure, unknown elsewhere: the student of the novel, for example, may accept the statement that Richardson's *Pamela,* appearing in 1740, is the first English novel, and later be puzzled by the title of Jusserand's volume, *The English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare.* The two questions, of course, are not quite parallel: there is general agreement that the term *essay* first appears in English, in anything like the present sense, when the first edition of Bacon's *Essays* is published in 1597; and it is reasonably clear that Bacon introduces not only the term but the thing itself into our literature. The problem of definition, nevertheless, still remains, and it is not less difficult for the essay than for the novel. To what kind of writing does the term *essay* properly apply? It is evident that the answer to this question has varied from one age to another. Hence, a summary of the history of the English essay implies some attempt to define not only the present but the past conception of what is meant by an essay.

Certain definite misconceptions may first be cleared away. The term is all too frequently applied to immature writing, to schoolboy compositions. When the average schoolboy is directed to write an "essay" on Christopher Columbus, he is given a task almost as much beyond his powers as if he were asked to produce an epic poem on the same subject. The word should certainly be reserved for the most finished and the most highly developed types of prose. Then too, the etymology of *essay* should not be allowed to mislead; the fact that the word literally means "trial," "attempt" does not really impute casualness to

the type of literature that goes by that name. Any tentativeness in the approach of the writer to his subject, and any inconclusiveness in the formulation of his ideas certainly do not imply want of skill or lack of finish in the writing. As its most accomplished exponents have treated it, there is no other kind of prose that is so carefully executed or so unmistakably marked by "style." It is easy to be misled here. There is an appearance of ease and utter carelessness in the work of some of our best essayists which may be mistaken for haste,—which may suggest that the essay has been dashed off in an idle half-hour. Mr. A. Edward Newton makes an interesting observation about the manuscript of Lamb's "Dream-Children," which is in his possession: the greater part is written with comparatively few changes and corrections, but the last sentences are scratched out and revised and rewritten until the manuscript is almost indecipherable. And this is precisely the part that might have seemed most swiftly and easily written. The conclusion would seem to be that such effects, such impeccable rhythm combined with the inevitably right words, are not attained without labor. The essay at its best, then, is truly to be described as marked by the appearance, but not the reality, of carelessness and ease.

Earlier uses of the term *essay* make it evident that it has been used with a much wider application in the past than in the present. Titles like Pope's *Essay on Man*, Locke's *Essay concerning the Human Understanding*, Malthus' *Essay on the Principle of Population* suggest the wide limits that were formerly possible. These particular uses, of course, would no longer be considered permissible: whatever else the essay is, it is undoubtedly a species of prose; and however wide the boundaries of its territory may be, they are no longer wide enough to include lengthy philosophical or sociological dissertations.

We come, then, to one criterion of our present understanding of the term. The essay is relatively short. Mere difference in dimensions would seem to be the reason for calling *Queen Vic-*

toria, for example, a biography and *Eminent Victorians* a group of biographical essays. And with the narrowing of the application of the term in this more external matter, there has gone, in more recent use, a tendency to emphasize one particular quality, which may perhaps best be designated by the word "informality." Formal essays, of course, are still possible and are still written; but the informal essay is the essay *par excellence.* The subject of the informal essay, as of the formal, is almost unrestricted, but its mood and atmosphere are distinct.

Whatever may be the preferred adjective, whether "informal," "personal," or "familiar," it is clear that there exists, within the far larger area of the general essay, a territory that has its own traditions and history. Since the essays of the present collection are intended to come from this section only of the general field, we must examine further into the nature of this central type of essay. Before doing this, it may be convenient to trace first, and necessarily very briefly, the history of the essay in general, with the emphasis, however, upon the familiar or personal type as written in England.

The essay is commonly thought of as distinctly a form of modern literature, and as the product, both in France and England, of the humanistic impulse of the Renaissance. There are, however, ancient and medieval predecessors that come close to at least one type, the moralizing or aphoristic, of the modern essay. Such are portions of at least two books of the Bible, *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes,* and many another product of the ancient wisdom of the East, as the *Sayings* of Confucius. An approach to, indeed a complete anticipation of the modern character-sketch (unmistakably a species of the essay, when considered historically) is found in the work of Theophrastus, one of the disciples of Aristotle. In Roman literature, such moralists as Seneca provide not merely inspiration but even models for the two great essayists of the Renaissance, Montaigne and Bacon.

The direct line of descent for the modern essay would seem to be the combination of two types, independent of each other but allied. The one is the collection of *sententiae* (wise sayings, epigrams, or maxims), bringing together, frequently under abstract headings such as "adversity," "death," "cowardice," the wisdom of ancient philosophers. The other is the collection of *exempla* (anecdotes, illustrative narratives), which might also be grouped so as to deal with generalizations similar to those which bound together the *sententiae*. Both of these were based upon classical precedent and both were therefore cultivated particularly in the Renaissance. It is the amalgamation of *sententiae* and *exempla* that gives us the *leçon morale* and the immediate background for the *Essais* of Montaigne.

Montaigne's first intention was obviously merely to add another volume or volumes similar to many which had preceded him. As he wrote, however, his conception was altered and eventually he added a new element, personal observation and experience,—and the modern essay was at length born. The final edition of Montaigne, that of 1595, was followed within a few years by Florio's English translation, one of the very few books certainly known to have belonged to Shakespeare's library, and Montaigne was accessible, in both forms, to the English writers of that most fertile period.

The English essayist whose work is inevitably associated in significance with Montaigne's, and who is not far removed from him in time, is of course Francis Bacon. Critical opinion as to the extent of Bacon's indebtedness to Montaigne differs very widely: some see not much more resemblance to the Frenchman than would be inevitable in two contemporary writers of great genius dealing with similar themes, (in addition, of course, to Bacon's appropriation of Montaigne's title, *Essais*); others feel that the more expansive style of Bacon's later editions, those of 1612 and 1625, as compared with the excessive abruptness of the edition of 1597, and the occasional use of the first per-

sonal pronoun, are marks of Montaigne's influence. On any count, however, the differences are more impressive than the resemblances. Bacon remains relatively objective, even in his last work; Montaigne is forever personal. Bacon scarcely succeeds, even where he tries, in being informal; Montaigne is frequently informal to the point of a levity that would be unthinkable in Bacon. There is nothing in Montaigne comparable to Bacon's aim of conveying advice (*Essays, or Counsels, Civil and Moral* is the title of the 1625 edition); indeed Montaigne in "To the Reader" specifically disclaims any other end than self-portraiture for the pleasure which that endeavor may give him and, possibly, others. In a word, Montaigne is at the very core and center of the familiar essay; Bacon is on the margin.

Though the Baconian tradition has remained a powerful one for later writers of the aphoristic essay, Bacon founded no school in his own day. The one important work of the early seventeenth century that may be said to rival Bacon on his own ground is Ben Jonson's *Timber* (1640). Throughout the century, however, there is no influence of Bacon to be noted which is in any way comparable in importance to that of the great Frenchman, as exemplified, in various ways, in the works of such writers as Browne, Cowley, Temple, and Dryden. Nevertheless, it is true that there are suggestions of Baconian terseness and sententiousness in the single frequently cultivated form that the essay takes in the earlier part of the century. This is the *genre* called the "character," as written by Hall, Overbury, and Earle. These sketches will be discussed in the pages devoted to the writers of this distinctive essay type.

For the most part, the familiar essay, in any strict interpretation of that label, is not represented in the seventeenth century until the appearance of Cowley's *Several Discourses, by Way of Essays, in Verse and Prose,* in 1668. However, the works of Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682), in spite of their length, must be held to belong to the inner circle of the essay. In the quaint-

ness of Browne's self-revelation we have one of the chief links in the process by which the tradition of Montaigne is handed down to later writers; moreover, it would be difficult to overestimate his influence as a stylist. Other contemplative and philosophical works, beloved of later essayists, though scarcely themselves to be described in any sense as essays, are Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living* (1650) and *Holy Dying* (1651), Thomas Fuller's *Holy and Profane State* (1641) and *Worthies* (1662), and, of course, Izaak Walton's *Compleat Angler* (1653-76). Occasionally, too, there rises, out of the welter of the political and religious pamphleteering of that troubled time, a work that is of permanent interest and value in the history of the essay and of English prose; such, preëminently, is Milton's *Areopagitica.*

In the period of the Restoration, the familiar essay emerges unmistakably, and we have also the very definitely marked beginnings of modern prose. The more elaborate and ornamental type of prose had unquestionably produced, in the hands of genius, as in the work of Browne, Taylor, and Milton, some of the most memorable passages in our prose literature, but it was clearly unsuited, for the most part, to general and pedestrian use. What was necessary was a more flexible medium, less removed from ordinary colloquial speech, and endowed with the virtue of clarity rather than that of grandeur. It has been said that the discovery of the new prose was made simultaneously by Cowley and Dryden. Cowley did relatively little with it, though his little volume of essays is still of considerable importance because it is so directly in the tradition of Montaigne; Dryden, on the other hand, did much. In spite of the fact that Dryden's prose is for the most part in the field of literary criticism, it is clear that he too is under the spell of Montaigne. "The nature of a preface," he says in the preface to *Fables, Ancient and Modern* (1699), "is rambling; never wholly out of

the way, nor in it. This I have learnt from the practice of honest Montaigne."

Two other writers of the Restoration who must be mentioned in even the briefest account of the development of the essay are Sir William Temple and George Savile, Marquis of Halifax. Temple, who is perhaps now best remembered by the very charming letters written to him by Dorothy Osborne, later Lady Temple, was in his own day and by succeeding generations extravagantly praised as a master of style. If the terms in which Temple was alluded to by Swift and Johnson now sound absurd, it may still be recalled that he wrote one of the most famous single sentences in English prose: "When all is done, human life is, at the greatest and the best, but like a froward child, that must be played with and humored a little to keep it quiet till it fall asleep, and then the care is over." Temple, like Dryden, wrote not merely essays in literary criticism, such as the well-known "Upon Ancient and Modern Learning," but others that are of the distinctly familiar type. The best known are "Upon the Gardens of Epicurus" and "Upon Health and Long Life." Halifax, perhaps, belongs less certainly in the province of the familiar essay; he is still, however, remembered not only for "The Character of a Trimmer" and "The Character of Charles II," but also for the delightfully personal "Lady's New-Year's Gift; or, Advice to a Daughter."

The outstanding contribution of the eighteenth century to the essay is the evolution of the periodical type. This, though it was, to begin with, merely a commentary upon the news of the day, and though it later retained something of its original editorial character, is still a broad enough conception to admit various subspecies of the essay, of which the personal, the critical, the moralistic, the "character," and the narrative may be mentioned. These various subtypes are, of course, frequently found in combination. Daniel Defoe (1661?-1731) stands

on the threshold of the eighteenth century periodical essay, as he stands on that of the eighteenth century novel; but it seems better, in each instance, to regard him rather as a forerunner than as an exemplar of the fully developed type. Nevertheless, good judges have considered a few at least of the hastily written editorials of Defoe's *Review*—notably the famous reflections on the funeral of the Duke of Marlborough, called "The Instability of Human Glory"—as superior in vigor and incisiveness to anything to be found in the *Tatler* or the *Spectator*. Defoe, however, wrote too fast and too much to allow most of his work in this form to rise above the level of ephemeral journalism or pamphleteering. It is usually felt that the transition from journalism to literature is accomplished by the *Tatler* rather than the *Review*.

There is, however, danger of overemphasizing the originality of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*. It is not merely that Steele and Addison might and undoubtedly did derive much in the way of suggestion as to method and subject from Defoe; apart from this, there is the very complete preparation, as we have seen, in the prose of the Restoration, for the more direct and simpler style of writing which Addison is sometimes given credit for perfecting. What is more, in the important matter of tone or atmosphere, in the suggestion of familiar intercourse between writer and reader, there were available models in Cowley, Dryden, Temple, and Halifax. Nevertheless, Steele and Addison are, surely with justice, given the greatest share of the credit for successfully widening the appeal of the essay and making it more nearly a social product. The *Tatler* and the *Spectator* are intended for the many, not the few; but their objects of social criticism and the reform of manners and morals are attained without undue concession to the more popular audience which they addressed. Steele and Addison were able to appeal both to the wit and the culture of the Cavalier and to the virtue and the morality of the Puritan—or their eighteenth century

descendants; their endeavor "to temper wit with morality and to enliven morality with wit" was brilliantly successful.

The *Tatler* ran from April 12, 1709 to January 2, 1711 as a tri-weekly journal; after a short interval it was succeeded by the *Spectator,* which was published as a daily from March 1, 1711 to December 6, 1712. Both collaborators contributed to the two papers, but Steele wrote almost all of the *Tatler* and retained control of the editorial policy of the *Spectator,* even though Addison wrote far more for this than for the earlier paper. The first reason for the termination of the *Spectator,* in spite of its great popularity, seems to have been the Stamp Tax of August 1712, which imposed too great a burden even for this successful journal to bear. By this time more than two hundred periodicals had been started in emulation of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator.* It is not remarkable, then, that the quality of the periodical essay should have declined as its numbers increased. Even Steele and Addison were later, as in the *Guardian* (1713), unable to rival successfully their own work in the earlier journals.

The essay, through the eighteenth century, may be thought of as alternating in popularity with the novel. The age of Queen Anne marks the first phase of the periodical essay. Then, following the demise of the *Spectator,* comes a decline, and the beginnings of the modern novel in the work of Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett. Just following the middle of the century, a revival of the periodical essay at the hands of Johnson and Goldsmith is to be observed, followed once more by a second phase of the novel, the new generation represented by Laurence Sterne, Goldsmith himself, and Horace Walpole. It may be conjectured that the reasons which account for the decay of the periodical essay after Johnson and Goldsmith are in part similar to those which explain a similar phenomenon after the earlier work of Steele and Addison in this field. For Johnson and Goldsmith, utterly different from each other though they were,

were at least as difficult to imitate successfully as Steele and Addison.

In summary, then, the periodical essay flourishes in the first years of the eighteenth century, particularly in the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*. It declines after 1712, though much work resembling more the political pamphlet than the familiar essay appears at this time, until it is reëstablished by Johnson's *Rambler* in 1750. Johnson, avowedly in imitation of Addison, tries, not always successfully, to revive the spirit and manner of the *Spectator;* and Goldsmith, a little later, does succeed in recapturing the grace and humor of the Queen Anne essayists, adding not a little of a charm that is altogether his own. Apart from Johnson and Goldsmith, only Henry Fielding, for his work in the *Champion* (1739-41) and the *Covent-Garden Journal* (1752-1754), need be mentioned among the essayists of the mid-century. Any reader of *Tom Jones,* with its prefaces and incidental discourses so thoroughly in the manner of the familiar essay, can see Fielding's great possibilities as an essayist; and, in spite of his necessarily keener interest in the novel, he deserves more attention in the history of the essay than he usually receives. After this group of writers, the periodical essay enters into its second, and so far as the eighteenth century conception is concerned, its permanent decline. There is virtually nothing of first rate importance in the interval that separates Goldsmith and Leigh Hunt.

The type of essay with which we are familiar in the magazines of our own day comes into being in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The founding of the *Edinburgh Review* in 1802, as important an event in the history of the essay as the founding of the *Tatler* just a century before, establishes a tradition, in both the critical and the familiar type of essay, that is still powerful. In the reviews and magazines of the early nineteenth century, particularly the *Quarterly Review,* as well as the *Edinburgh,* and *Blackwood's* and the *London Magazine,*

appeared some of the cream of the work of the new generation of essayists, particularly Lamb, Hazlitt, Wilson, and De Quincey. To the modern reader the best of this work seems more important in every way than the best of the work of the eighteenth century. Monthly, rather than weekly or daily publication, and the smaller number of rival journals in the field, meant that the editors could select from a far greater number of contributions the ones that they considered outstanding. Nor was the advantage all on one side: the essayist had now far more elbow-room (a typical Hazlitt essay is many times as long as a typical *Spectator* paper); he was far less restricted in choice of subject and manner of treatment than in the days when the conventions and traditions of the old periodical form were still powerful; and finally, he was paid far better than essayists had ever before been paid. As a result of these new conditions, the nineteenth century essay is in many respects a new thing: it is not limited in its address and its appeal to "the town," and it is, characteristically, not only longer, but far more varied and more individualized than its eighteenth century predecessor.

Leigh Hunt is frequently selected as the writer who best exemplifies the transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. His work recalls not merely the eighteenth century periodical essay but, frequently, the seventeenth century "character"; its dimensions as well as its quality—to a certain degree—are of the age that had vanished. Nevertheless Hunt is easily distinguishable from Steele or Addison; his love of nature, as in "Spring and Daisies," for example, suggests that Romanticism has had its influence and that he writes in another era than that which found its chief inspiration in the streets of London. It is to be remembered too that his ill-fated *Reflector* (1811-12) anticipated by several years the establishment of *Blackwood's* (1817) as the first important literary magazine.

It is inevitable, however, that Hunt should be overshadowed by two far greater essayists, some of whose early work he pub-

lished—Hazlitt and Lamb. These two, whose best work is commonly regarded as touching the highest level that the English familiar essay has yet attained, began to publish their most characteristic work simultaneously, in the *London Magazine* in 1820. Both did writing of importance in the field of criticism as well as in the familiar essay, and, with Coleridge and De Quincey, established this period as one of the great eras of English criticism. Nevertheless, it is natural to regard both Hazlitt and Lamb as primarily familiar essayists, both lovers of old books and garrulous discoursers on many themes, not the least important of which is that of self, albeit the personalities so fully revealed differ most strikingly. In the matter of style, too, they are poles apart, Hazlitt, in "On Familiar Style," putting the case for simplicity in writing as well as it has ever been put, and Lamb allowing the quaintness of his well-loved seventeenth century masters—Browne, Burton, and Fuller—to color his own phrasing, and doing it so beautifully and with such obvious absence of posturing that even Hazlitt must forgive him.

Most of the other essayists of the period of Romanticism write primarily the critical rather than the familiar type. Here belong Francis Jeffrey (1773-1850), editor of the *Edinburgh* and famous for his uncompromising attacks on some of the leading Romantic poets; John Wilson ("Christopher North") (1785-1854) and John Gibson Lockhart (1794-1854), who controlled the destinies of *Blackwood's* and also allowed personalities to color their criticism of literature to what now seems an amazing degree. Essentially a critical essayist too is a famous contributor to *Blackwood's*—Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859), whose cadenced and sonorous prose, as in "Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow," may occasionally be classified as in the field of the familiar essay. Here too should be added Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864), who revives and perfects a type of narrative essay in *Imaginary Conversations* and *Pericles and Aspasia.*

The great poets of the Romantic Revolt are likewise to be mentioned as invading the field of the critical essay. Wordsworth and Shelley are each famous in this other sphere for one outstanding title: Wordsworth's *Preface* to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) and Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* (1821). They are here, however, outdistanced by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whose *Biographia Literaria* (1817) is one of the landmarks of English literary criticism.

Various types of the formal critical essay continue to flourish in the Victorian age as well as in the period of Romanticism, and now almost to the exclusion of the familiar essay. Between Lamb and Stevenson there is remarkably little work of first-rate importance in the more informal type of essay. The one outstanding figure of the middle century is Thackeray, whose *Roundabout Papers,* published in 1860-63 in the *Cornhill Magazine,* entitle him to this solitary eminence. His fellow-novelist Dickens, with *Sketches by Boz* (1833-5) and *The Uncommercial Traveller* (1860 and 1868-9), deserves, perhaps, a lower place. Of the minor familiar essayists of the period, three at least should be mentioned: Dr. John Brown (1810-1882), for *Rab and his Friends* in the collection called *Horae Subsecivae* (1858, 1861, 1882), Alexander Smith (1829-1867), for *Dreamthorp* (1863); and Richard Jefferies (1848-1887), for such nature essays as those in *Field and Hedgerow* (1889).

For the essay in general, as written in the age of Victoria, perhaps a threefold division may be suggested, provided the lines of demarcation are not considered as hard and fast; this would classify writers of the non-familiar essay as primarily historians, critics, or scientists. Each group contains famous names, to which much more attention should of course be devoted in any full length sketch of the essay as a whole. To the first group belong Macaulay and Carlyle, who are both, however, critics as well as historians. To the second belong Arnold, Ruskin, and Pater—critics, all of them, of society as well as of

literature or art; and to this group the name of Cardinal Newman might be added. To the third belong such writers as Thomas Huxley, Alfred Russel Wallace, and Herbert Spencer.

The most noteworthy essayist of the closing decades of the century is R. L. Stevenson; his place in English literature as an essayist, if not as a novelist, short-story writer, or poet, seems more and more secure with the passing of the years. A familiar essayist even when dealing with critical subjects,—*Familiar Studies of Men and Books* is a significant title—he is perhaps best known for two types of subject: descriptive or travel sketches, and philosophical or aphoristic essays. The former is represented, at greater length than the stricter conception of the essay usually permits, in *An Inland Voyage* and *Travels with a Donkey;* the latter in some of the most famous of his shorter pieces, such as "A Christmas Sermon," "Aes Triplex," and "Pulvis et Umbra." With all his enthusiastic admiration for Hazlitt, Stevenson both preaches and practises a different theory of style: imitation of acknowledged masters of another age, such as Sir Thomas Browne; and conscious cultivation of such devices as rhythm, alliteration, and "balance of phrase." As a stylist, then, he suggests rather Lamb than Hazlitt; and his substance, as well as his manner, is not altogether unworthy of this high model.

Among the other personal essayists of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth are Francis Thompson (1859-1907), perhaps best known in this field for "The Way of Imperfection"; Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904), whose pictures of life in the French West Indies and in Japan are in the best vein of the travel essay; and, above all, George Gissing (1857-1903), the fame of whose work as a novelist has obscured his claims as an essayist—very unfortunately, for *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft,* though not precisely a collection of essays, surely deserves recognition as containing some of the most attractive essay-material since Stevenson. Two women—it is curious that almost until

our own time the essay has scarcely been touched by feminine hands—who may be mentioned here are Mary E. Coleridge (1861-1907), worthy inheritor of a great name, and a charming familiar essayist in such papers as "Gifts" and "On Paper Matches"; and Alice Meynell, who died in 1922, but whose collections of essays, *The Rhythm of Life* and *The Color of Life,* belong to the nineties.

The roll of outstanding essayists still alive or recently dead includes, to be sure, names that suggest primarily criticism of literature—for example, Edmund Gosse (1849-1928) and Augustine Birrell (1850-....)—but many others are equally representative of the familiar type. Such are G. K. Chesterton, John Galsworthy, Hilaire Belloc, and E. V. Lucas. It is misleading, however, to suggest that the conspicuous essayists of our own time are all quite so readily classified; the field of the contemporary essay is wide enough to include the work of historians like Philip Guedalla and scientists like Bertrand Russell. Perhaps, however, there will be little dissent from the opinion that in this day the familiar essay has unmistakably come into its own again, and further, that the truest representative of the type is Max Beerbohm.

What, then, to return to the questions with which we began, are the characteristics of the central type of essay, the type we have been stressing throughout this sketch of the development of the essay in general? What is implied when an essay is called familiar, informal, or personal? In the first place, the conception of a central type of essay, to which these qualifying terms may be applied, existing within a far larger field, would seem to be justified on the side of tone and manner, rather than subject. Discussion of books, for example, apparently implies criticism, and the formal rather than the informal essay. Yet who ever thinks of Lamb's "Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading" or Hazlitt's "On Reading Old Books" as anything but informal and personal? It is evident that almost the first requi-

site of the familiar essay is that it shall vividly mirror the writer's personality; what its theme is, matters remarkably little. The affinity between the familiar essay and lyric poetry has often been pointed out: the true essayists, says Ernest Rhys, are "dilute lyrists." There is scarcely a better touchstone to what is meant by the spirit or the manner of the familiar essay.

Further definition of the central type of essay may attempt to describe its subject matter, and its methods; but there is always the possibility that these prescribed limits are exceeded in excellent and indubitable examples of the type. It is evident, for example, that favorite subjects are from the field of contemporary manners and customs; but purer specimens of the familiar essay do not exist than such thoroughly personal reveries as Steele's "Recollections" or Lamb's "Dream-Children." Similarly, it may be said that the familiar essay, being interpretative, is normally expository in method; yet it may be narrative, like Lamb's "Dissertation on Roast Pig," probably the most widely known of all English essays, or descriptive, like Lamb's "South Sea House."

On the whole it seems wisest to pin our faith to the idea of the lyrical, the subjective quality of the familiar essay. And what does this imply as to the personality of our ideal essayist? He must, of course, not merely be able to reveal himself; he must have a personality that is worth revealing. It matters not whether he be like Lamb, a "lover of his species," or like Hazlitt, a disillusioned and embittered cynic. The only requirement is that the personality revealed be an interesting one. He must have a wide experience of life and of people and—almost an equal essential—of books; for our familiar essay is bookish, a distinctly literary, rather than an elemental product. It may be noted, incidentally, that the essay is frequently the product of an age that is critical rather than creative, contemplative rather than active. Surely it is no accident that the essay first emerges in English literature just at the close of its most productive period.

Finally, these considerations as to the ideal familiar essay and its maker suggest certain questions as to the ideal reader. For it is obvious that the essay has rarely been, and is not now, a really popular type of literature. Its appeal is to the few rather than the many; it is to-day surely an unequal contestant for popular favor with the novel, the short story, and the play. The reasons are not far to seek. The essay is not easy reading, as that phrase is commonly understood. It demands the ability to read slowly and thoughtfully. The length of the present collection does not exceed that of many novels; but the reader who should attempt to go through it at a similar rate of speed would have a bad case of mental indigestion. The "bookish" quality of the familiar essay is an obstacle to many. Its charm is largely dependent upon an allusiveness which assumes in the reader some real acquaintance with life and with letters.

And yet all this is perhaps misleading. Certainly it is so, if it has been suggested that the reading of essays is a task rather than a pleasure. Slow reading may be, and should be, delightful. Nor does the supposition that the worthwhile essay is written with care and thoughtfulness indicate that it is not to be read with the fullest enjoyment. "Easy writing," said R. B. Sheridan, "makes damned hard reading." For our purpose, it is pertinent to remember that the converse may be just as true.

Montaigne

Montaigne

(1533-1592)

The Essay, like the art of printing, is at its best almost in its beginning: Michel de Montaigne is commonly held to be at once the first and the greatest of essayists. The achievement of Montaigne that has made his name the inspiration of generation after generation of essayists may perhaps best be described as his identification of himself with his work, his infusion of personality, to an extent quite without parallel, into his writing. "He was the first," says Hazlitt, "who had the courage to say as an author what he felt as a man"; as Stevenson observes of another remark of Hazlitt's, that is "the gist of all that can be said on the matter." This extreme of subjectivity was not, of course, accomplished at a single stride. When Montaigne, in early middle life, retired to his tower-library to read and meditate, he planned nothing more ambitious in the way of writing than the compilation of *leçons morales;* the transition to the *essai* was a gradual one. The title *Essais,* to be sure, was used for the first, or 1580, edition; but, despite the preface "To the Reader," it accurately describes only a very few (such as "Of Books") of the chapters of that collection. In the third book, added in 1588 to the two already published, we have the acme of his rambling and highly personal meditations in such a masterpiece as "Of Repentance."

Something important is doubtless lost when Montaigne's essays are presented in extracts: the full measure of his discursiveness can be only suggested. The compensation is that this method gives us his ideas on varied subjects—books, friendship, self-analysis, for example—which may be compared with similar reflections of English essayists and the process through which the personal essay developed may, in this way, at least be hinted at. It remains to suggest that Montaigne's lack of formality should not be misinterpreted. That he appears to take himself with little seriousness is no reason for the reader to refuse to take him seriously. Sainte-Beuve described him as "the wisest Frenchman who ever lived"; but it is part of his method to present his wisdom unobtrusively. "Every now and then he drops a maxim, as if by accident, as one might drop a pin in a meadow"—thus a French essayist

of our day puts the matter. The thoughts of Montaigne, if not paraded with the dignity that accompanies those of Bacon, are at least equally worthy of our attention.

The Author to the Reader [1]

READER, lo here a well-meaning book. It doth at the first entrance forewarn thee that in contriving the same I have proposed unto myself no other than a familiar and private end: I have no respect or consideration at all either to thy service or to my glory; my forces are not capable of any such design. I have vowed the same to the particular commodity [2] of my kinsfolks and friends; to the end that losing me (which they are likely to do ere long) they may therein find some lineaments of my conditions and humours, and by that means reserve more whole, and more lively foster, the knowledge and acquaintance they have had of me. Had my intention been to forestall and purchase the world's opinion and favour, I would surely have adorned myself more quaintly, or kept a more grave and solemn march. I desire therein to be delineated in mine own genuine, simple, and ordinary fashion, without contention, art, or study; for it is myself I portray. My imperfections shall therein be read to the life, and my natural form discerned, so far forth as public reverence hath permitted me. For if my fortune had been to have lived among those nations [3] which yet are said to live under the sweet liberty of Nature's first and uncorrupted laws, I assure thee I would most willingly have portrayed myself fully and naked. Thus, gentle Reader, myself am the groundwork of my book. It is then no reason thou shouldest employ thy time

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[1] This selection is given in Florio's Elizabethan translation; the others in Cotton's version of 1685, with the nineteenth century corrections of William and W. C. Hazlitt.
[2] advantage.
[3] The aborigines of America are probably meant.

about so frivolous and vain a subject. Therefore farewell. From Montaigne, the first of March 1580.

Of Friendship

HAVING considered the proceedings of a painter that serves me, I had a mind to imitate his way. He chooses the fairest place and middle of any wall, or panel, wherein to draw a picture, which he finishes with his utmost care and art, and the vacuity about it he fills with grotesques, which are odd fantastic figures without any grace but what they derive from their variety, and the extravagance of their shapes. And in truth, what are these things I scribble, other than grotesques and monstrous bodies, made of various parts, without any certain figure, or any other than accidental order, coherence, or proportion?

Desinit in piscem mulier, formosa superne.[4]

In this second part I go hand in hand with my painter; but fall very short of him in the first and the better, my power of handling not being such, that I dare to offer at a rich piece, finely polished, and set off according to art. I have therefore thought fit to borrow one of Estienne de la Boetie[5] and such a one as shall honor and adorn all the rest of my work—namely, a discourse that he called Voluntary Servitude; but, since, those who did not know him have properly enough called it *Le contre Un.*[6] He wrote it in his youth by way of essay, in honor of liberty against tyrants; and it has since run through the hands of men of great learning and judgment, not without singular and merited commendation; for it is finely written, and as full as anything can

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[4] A beautiful woman's form ends in a fish's tail (Horace).
[5] Montaigne's dearest friend.
[6] *Against One* (i.e. against the tyrant); a violent protest against tyranny.

possibly be. And yet one may confidently say it is far short of what he was able to do; and if in that more mature age, wherein I had the happiness to know him, he had taken a design like this of mine, to commit his thoughts to writing, we should have seen a great many rare things, and such as would have gone very near to have rivaled the best writings of antiquity: for in natural parts especially, I know no man comparable to him. But he has left nothing behind him, save this treatise only (and that, too, by chance, for I believe he never saw it after it first went out of his hands), and some observations upon that edict of January,[7] made famous by our civil wars, which also shall elsewhere, peradventure, find a place. These were all I could recover of his remains, I to whom, with so affectionate a remembrance, upon his deathbed, he by his last will bequeathed his library and papers, the little book of his works only excepted, which I committed to the press. And this particular obligation I have to this treatise of his, that it was the occasion of my first coming acquainted with him; for it was showed to me long before I had the good fortune to know him; and gave me the first knowledge of his name, proving the first cause and foundation of a friendship which we afterward improved and maintained, so long as God was pleased to continue us together, so perfect, inviolate, and entire, that certainly the like is hardly to be found in story, and among the men of this age there is no sign nor trace of any such thing in use; so much concurrence is required to the building of such a one, that 'tis much, if fortune bring it but once to pass in three ages.

There is nothing to which nature seems so much to have inclined us, as to society; and Aristotle says, that the good legislators had more respect to friendship than to justice. Now the most supreme point of its perfection is this: for, generally, all those that pleasure, profit, public or private interest create and

[7] that of January 1562, granting the Huguenots greater religious freedom.

nourish, are so much the less beautiful and generous, and so much the less friendships, by how much they mix another cause, and design, and fruit in friendship, than itself. Neither do the four ancient kinds, natural, social, hospitable, venerian,[8] either separately or jointly, make up a true and perfect friendship.

That of children to parents is rather respect: friendship is nourished by communication, which cannot, by reason of the great disparity, be between these, but would rather perhaps offend the duties of nature; for neither are all the secret thoughts of fathers fit to be communicated to children, lest it beget an indecent familiarity between them; nor can the advices and reproofs, which is one of the principal offices of friendship, be properly performed by the son to the father. There are some countries where 'twas the custom for children to kill their fathers; and others, where the fathers killed their children, to avoid their being an impediment one to another in life; and naturally the expectations of the one depend upon the ruin of the other. There have been great philosophers who have made nothing of this tie of nature, as Aristippus for one, who being pressed home about the affection he owed to his children, as being come out of him, presently fell to spit, saying, that this also came out of him, and that we also breed worms and lice; and that other, that Plutarch endeavored to reconcile to his brother; "I make never the more account of him," said he, "for coming out of the same hole." This name of brother does indeed carry with it a fine and delectable sound, and for that reason, he and I called one another brothers, but the complication of interests, the division of estates, and that the wealth of the one should be the poverty of the other, strangely relax and weaken the fraternal tie: brothers pursuing their fortune and advancement by the same path, 'tis hardly possible, but they must of necessity often jostle and hinder one another. Besides, why is it necessary that the

[8] based on sexual attraction.

correspondence of manners, parts, and inclinations, which begets the true and perfect friendships, should always meet in these relations? The father and the son may be of quite contrary humors, and so of brothers: he is my son, he is my brother; but he is passionate, ill-natured, or a fool. And moreover, by how much these are friendships that the law and natural obligation impose upon us, so much less is there of our own choice and voluntary freedom; whereas that voluntary liberty of ours has no production more promptly and properly its own than affection and friendship. Not that I have not in my own person experimented all that can possibly be expected of that kind, having had the best and most indulgent father, even to his extreme old age, that ever was and who was himself descended from a family for many generations famous and exemplary for brotherly concord.

Et ipse
Notus in fratres animi paterni.[9]

We are not here to bring the love we bear to women, though it be an act of our own choice, into comparison; nor rank it with the others. The fire of this, I confess,

Neque enim est dea nescia nostri
Quæ dulcem curis miscet amaritiem,[10]

is more active, more eager and more sharp: but withal, 'tis more precipitant, fickle, moving and inconstant; a fever subject to intermissions and paroxysms, that has seized but on one part of us. Whereas in friendship 'tis a general and universal fire, but temperate and equal, a constant established heat, all gentle and smooth, without poignancy or roughness. Moreover, in love, 'tis no other than frantic desire for that which flies from us:

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[9] And I myself noted for fatherly love toward my brothers (Horace).
[10] I have not been unknown to the goddess who mingles sweet bitterness with our cares (Catullus).

Come segue la lepre il cacciatore
Al freddo, al caldo, alla montagna, al lito;
Ne piu l' estima poi che presa vede;
E sol dietro a chi fugge affretta il piede:[11]

so soon as it enters into the terms of friendship, that is to say, into a concurrence of desires, it vanishes and is gone, fruition destroys it, as having only a fleshly end, and such a one as is subject to satiety. Friendship, on the contrary, is enjoyed proportionately as it is desired; and only grows up, is nourished and improves by enjoyment, as being of itself spiritual, and the soul growing still more refined by practice. Under this perfect friendship, the other fleeting affections have in my younger years found some place in me, to say nothing of him, who himself so confesses but too much in his verses; so that I had both these passions, but always so, that I could myself well enough distinguish them, and never in any degree of comparison with one another; the first maintaining its flight in so lofty and so brave a place, as with disdain to look down, and see the other flying at a far humbler pitch below.

As concerning marriage, besides that it is a covenant, the entrance into which only is free, but the continuance in it forced and compulsory, having another dependence than that of our own free will, and a bargain commonly contracted to other ends, there almost always happens a thousand intricacies in it to unravel, enough to break the thread and to divert the current of a lively affection: whereas friendship has no manner of business or traffic with aught but itself. Moreover, to say truth, the ordinary talent of women is not such as is sufficient to maintain the conference and communication required to the support of this sacred tie; nor do they appear to be endued with constancy of mind, to sustain the pinch of so hard and durable a knot.

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[11] As the hunter chases the hare, in cold and heat, over hill and dale; but when it is caught, he takes no more thought of it, and only delights in pursuing that which flees from him (Ariosto).

And doubtless, if without this, there could be such a free and voluntary familiarity contracted where not only the souls might have this entire fruition, but the bodies also might share in the alliance, and a man be engaged throughout, the friendship would certainly be more full and perfect; but it is without example that this sex has ever yet arrived at such perfection; and by the common consent of the ancient schools, it is wholly rejected from it. . . .

I return to my own more just and true description. *Omnino amicitiae, corroboratis jam confirmatisque, et ingeniis, et aetatibus, judicandae sunt.*[12] For the rest, what we commonly call friends and friendships, are nothing but acquaintance and familiarities, either occasionally contracted or upon some design, by means of which there happens some little intercourse between our souls. But in the friendship I speak of, they mix and work themselves into one piece, with so universal a mixture, that there is no more sign of the seam by which they were first conjoined. If a man should importune me to give a reason why I loved him, I find it could no otherwise be expressed, than by making answer: because it was he, because it was I. There is, beyond all that I am able to say, I know not what inexplicable and fated power that brought on this union. We sought one another long before we met, and by the characters we heard of one another, which wrought upon our affections more than, in reason, mere reports should do; I think 'twas by some secret appointment of heaven. We embraced in our names; and at our first meeting, which was accidentally at a great city entertainment, we found ourselves so mutually taken with one another, so acquainted, and so endeared between ourselves, that from thenceforward nothing was so near to us as one another. He wrote an excellent Latin satire, since printed, wherein he excuses the precipitation of our intel-

[12] Those only are to be accounted friendships that are fortified and confirmed by judgment and length of time (Cicero).

ligence, so suddenly come to perfection, saying, that destined to have so short a continuance, as begun so late (for we were both full-grown men, and he some years the older), there was no time to lose, nor were we tied to conform to the example of those slow and regular friendships that require so many precautions of long preliminary conversation. This has no other idea than that of itself, and can only refer to itself: this is no one special consideration, nor two, nor three, nor four, nor a thousand; 't is I know not what quintessence of all this mixture, which, seizing my whole will, carried it to plunge and lose itself in his, and that having seized his whole will, brought it back with equal concurrence and appetite to plunge and lose itself in mine. I may truly say lose, reserving nothing to ourselves, that was either his or mine.

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Of Books

I MAKE no doubt but that I often happen to speak of things that are much better and more truly handled by those who are masters o the trade. You have here purely an essay of my natural parts, and not of those acquired: and whoever shall catch me tripping in ignorance, will not in any sort get the better of me; for I should be very unwilling to become responsible to another for my writings, who am not so to myself, nor satisfied with them. Whoever goes in quest of knowledge, let him fish for it where it is to be found; there is nothing I so little profess. These are fancies of my own, by which I do not pretend to discover things but to lay open myself; they may, peradventure, one day be known to me, or have formerly been, according as fortune has been able to bring me in place where they have been explained; but I have utterly forgotten it; and

if I am a man of some reading, I am a man of no retention; so that I can promise no certainty, more than to make known to what point the knowledge I now have has risen. Therefore, let none lay stress upon the matter I write, but upon my method in writing it. Let them observe, in what I borrow, if I have known how to choose what is proper to raise or help the invention, which is always my own. For I make others say for me, not before but after me, what, either for want of language or want of sense, I cannot myself so well express. I do not number my borrowings, I weigh them; and had I designed to raise their value by number, I had made them twice as many; they are all, or within a very few, so famed and ancient authors, that they seem, methinks, themselves sufficiently to tell who they are, without giving me the trouble. In reasons, comparisons, and arguments, if I transplant any into my own soil, and confound them amongst my own, I purposely conceal the author, to awe the temerity of those precipitate censors who fall upon all sorts of writings, particularly the late ones, of men yet living, and in the vulgar tongue which puts every one into a capacity of criticising and which seems to convict the conception and design as vulgar also. I will have them give Plutarch a fillip on my nose, and rail against Seneca when they think they rail at me. I must shelter my own weakness under these great reputations. I shall love any one that can unplume me, that is, by clearness of understanding and judgment, and by the sole distinction of the force and beauty of the discourse. For I who, for want of memory, am at every turn at a loss to pick them out of their national livery, am yet wise enough to know, by the measure of my own abilities, that my soil is incapable of producing any of those rich flowers that I there find growing; and that all the fruits of my own growth are not worth any one of them. For this, indeed, I hold myself responsible: if I get in my own way; if there be any vanity and defect in my writings which I do not of myself perceive nor can discern, when pointed out to me by another;

for many faults escape our eye, but the infirmity of judgment consists in not being able to discern them when, by another, laid open to us. Knowledge and truth may be in us without judgment, and judgment also without them; but the confession of ignorance is one of the finest and surest testimonies of judgment that I know. I have no other officer to put my writings in rank and file, but only fortune. As things come into my head, I heap them one upon another; sometimes they advance in whole bodies, sometimes in single file. I would that every one should see my natural and ordinary pace, irregular as it is; I suffer myself to jog on at my own rate. Neither are these subjects which a man is not permitted to be ignorant in, or casually and at a venture, to discourse of. I could wish to have a more perfect knowledge of things, but I will not buy it so dear as it costs. My design is to pass over easily, and not laboriously, the remainder of my life; there is nothing that I will cudgel my brains about; no, not even knowledge, of what value soever.

I seek, in the reading of books, only to please myself, by an honest diversion; or, if I study, 'tis for no other science than what treats of the knowledge of myself, and instructs me how to die and how to live well.

Has meus ad metas sudet oportet equus.[13]

I do not bite my nails about the difficulties I meet with in my reading; after a charge or two, I give them over. Should I insist upon them, I should both lose myself and time; for I have an impatient understanding, that must be satisfied at first: what I do not discern at once, is by persistence rendered more obscure. I do nothing without gaiety; continuation and a too obstinate endeavor, darkens, stupefies, and tires my judgment. My sight is confounded and dissipated with poring; I must withdraw it, and refer my discovery to new attempts; just as to judge rightly

[13] I must train my horse to this course (Propertius).

of the lustre of scarlet, we are taught to pass the eye lightly over it, and again to run it over at several sudden and reiterated glances. If one book do not please me, I take another; and never meddle with any, but at such times as I am weary of doing nothing. I care not much for new ones, because the old seem fuller and stronger; neither do I converse much with Greek authors, because my judgment cannot do its work with imperfect intelligence of the material.

Amongst books that are simply pleasant, of the moderns, Boccaccio's *Decameron,* Rabelais, and the *Basia*[14] of Johannes Secundus (if those may be ranged under the title) are worth reading for amusement. As to *Amadis,*[15] and such kind of stuff, they had not credit to take me, so much as in my childhood. And I will, moreover, say, whether boldly or rashly, that this old, heavy soul of mine is now no longer tickled with Ariosto, no, nor with Ovid; his facility and inventions, with which I was formerly so ravished, are now of no more relish, and I can hardly have the patience to read them. I speak my opinion freely of all things, even of those that, perhaps, exceed my capacity, and that I do not conceive to be, in any wise, under my jurisdiction. And, accordingly, the judgment I deliver is to show the measure of my own sight, and not of the things I make so bold to criticise. When I find myself disgusted with Plato's *Axiochus,*[16] as with a work, with due respect to such an author be it spoken, without force, my judgment does not believe itself: it is not so arrogant as to oppose the authority of so many other famous judgments of antiquity, which it considers as its tutors and masters, and with whom it is rather content to err; in such a case, it condemns itself either to stop at the outward bark, not being able to penetrate to the heart, or to consider it by some

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[14] published in 1539; the best known of the works of Johannes Secundus (whose true name was Jan Nicolai Everaerts).
[15] the most famous of medieval romances.
[16] Montaigne is in error in ascribing this dialogue to Plato.

false light. It is content with only securing itself from trouble and disorder; as to its own weakness, it frankly acknowledges and confesses it. It thinks it gives a just interpretation to the appearances by its conceptions presented to it; but they are weak and imperfect. Most of the fables of Aesop have diverse senses and meanings, of which the mythologists chose some one that quadrates well to the fable; but, for the most part, 'tis but the first face that presents itself and is superficial only; there yet remain others more vivid, essential, and profound, into which they have not been able to penetrate; and just so 'tis with me.

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Of Repentance

OTHERS form man; I only report him: and represent a particular one, ill-fashioned enough, and whom, if I had to model him anew, I should certainly make something else than what he is: but that's past recalling. Now, though the features of my picture alter and change, 'tis not, however, unlike: the world eternally turns round; all things therein are incessantly moving, the earth, the rocks of Caucasus, and the pyramids of Egypt, both by the public motion and their own. Even constancy itself is no other but a slower and more languishing motion. I cannot fix my object; 'tis always tottering and reeling by a natural giddiness; I take it as it is at the instant I consider it; I do not paint its being, I paint its passage; not a passing from one age to another, or, as the people say, from seven to seven years, but from day to day, from minute to minute. I must accommodate my history to the hour: I may presently change, not only by fortune, but also by intention. 'Tis a counterpart of various and changeable accidents, and of irresolute imaginations, and, as it falls out, sometimes contrary: whether it be that

I am then another self, or that I take subjects by other circumstances and considerations: so it is, that I may peradventure contradict myself, but, as Demades said,[17] I never contradict the truth. Could my soul once take footing, I would not essay but resolve: but it is always learning and making trial.

I propose a life ordinary and without lustre: 'tis all one; all moral philosophy may as well be applied to a common and private life, as to one of richer composition: every man carries the entire form of human condition. Authors communicate themselves to the people by some especial and extrinsic mark; I, the first of any, by my universal being; as Michel de Montaigne, not as a grammarian, a poet, or a lawyer. If the world find fault that I speak too much of myself, I find fault that they do not so much as think of themselves. But is it reason that, being so particular in my way of living, I should pretend to recommend myself to the public knowledge? And is it also reason that I should produce to the world, where art and handling have so much credit and authority, crude and simple effects of nature, and of a weak nature to boot? Is it not to build a wall without stone or brick, or some such thing, to write books without learning and without art? The fancies of music are carried on by art; mine by chance. I have this, at least, according to discipline, that never any man treated of a subject he better understood and knew than I what I have undertaken, and that in this I am the most understanding man alive: secondly, that never any man penetrated farther into his matter, nor better and more distinctly sifted the parts and sequences of it, nor ever more exactly and fully arrived at the end he proposed to himself. To perfect it, I need bring nothing but fidelity to the work; and that is there, and the most pure and sincere that is anywhere to be found. I speak truth, not so much as I would, but as much as I dare; and I dare a little the more, as I grow older; for, methinks, custom

[17] as quoted by Plutarch.

allows to age more liberty of prating, and more indiscretion of talking of a man's self. That cannot fall out here, which I often see elsewhere, that the work and the artificer contradict one another: "Can a man of such sober conversation have written so foolish a book?" Or "Do so learned writings proceed from a man of so weak conversation?" He who talks at a very ordinary rate, and writes rare matter, 'tis to say that his capacity is borrowed and not his own. A learned man is not learned in all things: but a sufficient man is sufficient throughout, even to ignorance itself; here my book and I go hand in hand together. Elsewhere men may commend or censure the work, without reference to the workman; here they cannot: who touches the one, touches the other. He who shall judge of it without knowing him, will more wrong himself than me; he who does know him, gives me all the satisfaction I desire. I shall be happy beyond my desert, if I can obtain only thus much from the public approbation, as to make men of understanding perceive that I was capable of profiting by knowledge, had I had it; and that I deserved to have been assisted by a better memory.

Be pleased here to excuse what I often repeat, that I very rarely repent, and that my conscience is satisfied with itself, not as the conscience of an angel, or that of a horse, but as the conscience of a man; always adding this clause, not one of ceremony, but a true and real submission, that I speak inquiring and doubting, purely and simply referring myself to the common and accepted beliefs for the resolution. I do not teach, I only relate.

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'Tis an exact life that maintains itself in due order in private. Every one may juggle his part, and represent an honest man upon the stage: but within, and in his own bosom, where all may do as they list, where all is concealed, to be regular,—there's the point. The next degree is to be so in his house, and in his

ordinary actions, for which we are accountable to none, and where there is no study nor artifice. And therefore Bias, setting forth the excellent state of a private family, says: "of which the master is the same within, by his own virtue and temper, that he is abroad, for fear of the laws and report of men." And it was a worthy saying of Julius Drusus,[18] to the masons who offered him, for three thousand crowns, to put his house in such a posture that his neighbours should no longer have the same inspection into it as before; "I will give you," said he, "six thousand to make it so that everybody may see into every room." 'Tis honourably recorded of Agesilaus,[19] that he used in his journeys always to take up his lodgings in temples, to the end that the people and the gods themselves might pry into his most private actions. Such a one has been a miracle to the world, in whom neither his wife nor servant has ever seen anything so much as remarkable; few men have been admired by their own domestics; no one was ever a prophet, not merely in his own house, but in his own country, says the experience of histories: 'tis the same in things of nought, and in this low example the image of a greater is to be seen. In my country of Gascony, they look upon it as a drollery to see me in print; the further off I am read from my own home, the better I am esteemed. I purchase printers in Guienne;[20] elsewhere they purchase me. Upon this it is that they lay their foundation who conceal themselves present and living, to obtain a name when they are dead and absent. I had rather have a great deal less in hand, and do not expose myself to the world upon any other account than my present share; when I leave it I quit the rest. See this functionary whom the people escort in state, with wonder and applause, to his very door; he puts off the pageant with his robe, and falls so much the lower by how much he was higher exalted:

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[18] a Roman statesman (died c. 109 B.C.).
[19] King of Sparta. This anecdote is from Plutarch.
[20] Gascony and Guienne formed, in Montaigne's day, one "country."

in himself within, all is tumult and degraded. And though all should be regular there, it will require a vivid and well-chosen judgment to perceive it in these low and private actions; to which may be added, that order is a dull, sombre virtue. To enter a breach, conduct an embassy, govern a people, are actions of renown; to reprehend, laugh, sell, pay, love, hate, and gently and justly converse with a man's own family and with himself; not to relax, not to give a man's self the lie, is more rare and hard, and less remarkable. By which means, retired lives, whatever is said to the contrary, undergo duties of as great or greater difficulty than the others do; and private men, says Aristotle, serve virtue more painfully and highly than those in authority do: we prepare ourselves for eminent occasions, more out of glory than conscience. The shortest way to arrive at glory, would be to do that for conscience which we do for glory: and the virtue of Alexander appears to me of much less vigour in his great theatre, than that of Socrates in his mean and obscure employment. I can easily conceive Socrates in the place of Alexander, but Alexander in that of Socrates, I cannot. Who shall ask the one what he can do, he will answer, "Subdue the world:" and who shall put the same question to the other, he will say, "Carry on human life conformably with its natural condition;" a much more general, weighty, and legitimate science than the other.

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In my opinion, 'tis the happy living, and not (as Antisthenes [21] said) the happy dying, in which human felicity consists. I have not made it my business to make a monstrous addition of a philosopher's tail to the head and body of a libertine; nor would I have this wretched remainder give the lie to the pleasant, sound, and long part of my life: I would present myself uniformly

[21] a Greek philosopher.

throughout. Were I to live my life over again, I should live it just as I have lived it; I neither complain of the past, nor do I fear the future; and if I am not much deceived, I am the same within that I am without. 'Tis one main obligation I have to my fortune, that the succession of my bodily estate has been carried on according to the natural seasons; I have seen the grass, the blossom, and the fruit, and now see the withering; happily, however, because naturally. I bear the infirmities I have the better, because they came not till I had reason to expect them, and because also they make me with greater pleasure remember that long felicity of my past life. My wisdom may have been just the same in both ages; but it was more active, and of better grace whilst young and sprightly, than now it is when broken, peevish, and uneasy. I repudiate, then, these casual and painful reformations. God must touch our hearts; our consciences must amend of themselves, by the aid of our reason, and not by the decay of our appetites; pleasure is, in itself, neither pale nor discoloured, to be discerned by dim and decayed eyes.

We ought to love temperance for itself, and because God has commanded that and chastity; but that which we are reduced to by catarrhs, and for which I am indebted to the stone, is neither chastity nor temperance; a man cannot boast that he despises and resists pleasure, if he cannot see it, if he knows not what it is, and cannot discern its graces, its force, and most alluring beauties; I know both the one and the other, and may therefore the better say it. But, methinks, our souls in old age are subject to more troublesome maladies and imperfections than in youth; I said the same when young and when I was reproached with the want of a beard; and I say so now that my grey hairs give me some authority. We call the difficulty of our humours and the disrelish of present things wisdom; but, in truth, we do not so much forsake vices as we change them, and, in my opinion, for worse. Besides a foolish and feeble pride, an impertinent prating, froward and insociable humours, superstition, and a

ridiculous desire of riches when we have lost the use of them, I find there more envy, injustice, and malice. Age imprints more wrinkles in the mind than it does on the face; and souls are never, or very rarely seen, that, in growing old, do not smell sour and musty. Man moves all together, both towards his perfection and decay. In observing the wisdom of Socrates, and many circumstances of his condemnation, I should dare to believe that he in some sort himself purposely, by collusion, contributed to it, seeing that, at the age of seventy years, he might fear to suffer the lofty motions of his mind to be cramped and his wonted lustre obscured. What strange metamorphoses do I see age every day make in many of my acquaintance! 'Tis a potent malady, and that naturally and imperceptibly steals into us; a vast provision of study and great precaution are required to evade the imperfections it loads us with, or at least to weaken their progress. I find that, notwithstanding all my entrenchments, it gets foot by foot upon me: I make the best resistance I can, but I do not know to what at last it will reduce me. But fall out what will, I am content the world may know, when I am fallen, from what I fell.

Bacon

Bacon

(1561-1626)

Francis Bacon, afterwards Baron Verulam and Viscount St. Albans, though he is commonly regarded as the first both in time and in importance of our aphoristic essayists, is nevertheless an essayist only incidentally. His essays are the mere by-product of a life filled with great achievement and greater ambition. What he himself regarded as his more important work was in such varied fields as law, statecraft, philosophy, and science. It was Bacon who said that he "took all knowledge for his province," and who believed that his mind could not only comprehend all that was known in his day but that it could extend the boundaries of knowledge in every direction.

The facts of Bacon's career, of which the essays are so curious an echo, can be only suggested here. Destined by birth and by training in law and diplomacy for the service of the state, he was for a long time balked in his more ambitious designs, though he enjoyed the valuable patronage of Elizabeth's favorite, the Earl of Essex. His relations to Essex are perhaps subject to more than one interpretation; but his final desertion of the Earl and, still more, his share in the prosecution which resulted in his patron's execution, suggest at least extreme callousness, if not the basest ingratitude. Under James I, Bacon rose from office to office, until in 1618 he became Lord Chancellor. Then followed his dramatic downfall. He was convicted, in his capacity as judge, of having accepted bribes, and deemed incapable of holding further office in the state, though the additional sentence of fine and imprisonment was remitted by the King. In the remaining five years of his life, given over to literary and scientific work in his retirement, the essays took their final and more expanded form.

The obvious contrast between the intellectual greatness and the moral littleness of Bacon has tempted the most violent paradoxes in the interpretation of the man and his work. Pope's line, "the wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind," represents a familiar view of Bacon. Lytton Strachey's brilliant but one-sided portrait of him in *Elizabeth and Essex* is a more recent instance. Yet the contrast undoubtedly exists. No attentive reader of Bacon can fail to be aware of a want

of warmth, of emotion, of idealism. He is severely utilitarian, forever practical, and never sentimental. Where his worldly wisdom does not apply, he is unsatisfying; his views of friendship, of marriage, of truth, and of death betray an extraordinary insensibility of feeling.

If it be allowed he has defects, his merits are still extremely impressive. He characteristically strikes at once at the heart of his subject in a brilliant aphorism: "Revenge is a kind of wild justice"; "He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune." Certainly no writer surpasses Bacon in expressing much in few words. This trait, indeed, constitutes a real difficulty for the reader. In such an essay as "Of Studies," the reader must go very slowly; he must ponder, weigh the value of the observation, and supply his own expansion and illustration. The ideas of Bacon are usually well worth such a process of analysis and interpretation. It is evident, of course, that he is only in small measure a personal essayist. He writes rather to counsel others, to give the younger generation, particularly the young courtier, the benefit of his own contact with the great world. Yet there is occasional, and perhaps unwitting, self-revelation, as in the unexpected pathos of "Of Great Place." Here is at least an approach to an apology for his public career, a hint of his tragic inability to reconcile contending interests, to make love of place and power compatible with an unselfish devotion to knowledge and a desire to benefit his country and the world.

Of Truth

What is truth? said jesting Pilate[1]; and would not stay for an answer. Certainly there be that delight in giddiness, and count it a bondage to fix a belief; affecting free-will in thinking, as well as in acting. And though the sects of philosophers of that kind be gone, yet there remain certain discoursing wits which are of the same veins, though there be not so much blood in them as was in those of the ancients. But it is not only the difficulty and labour which men take in finding out of truth, nor again that when it is found it imposeth upon men's thoughts,

[1] at the trial of Christ; cf. *John* XVIII, 38.

that doth bring lies in favour; but a natural though corrupt love of the lie itself. One of the later school of the Grecians examineth the matter, and is at a stand to think what should be in it, that men should love lies; where neither they make for pleasure, as with poets; nor for advantage, as with the merchant; but for the lie's sake. But I cannot tell: this same truth is a naked and open day-light, that doth not shew the masques and mummeries and triumphs of the world half so stately and daintily as candle-lights. Truth may perhaps come to the price of a pearl, that sheweth best by day; but it will not rise to the price of a diamond or carbuncle, that sheweth best in varied lights. A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure. Doth any man doubt, that if there were taken out of men's minds vain opinions, flattering hopes, false valuations, imaginations as one would, and the like, but it would leave the minds of a number of men poor shrunken things, full of melancholy and indisposition, and unpleasing to themselves? One of the Fathers, in great severity, called poesy *vinum dæmonum*,[2] because it filleth the imagination; and yet it is but with the shadow of a lie. But it is not the lie that passeth through the mind, but the lie that sinketh in and settleth in it, that doth the hurt, such as we spake of before. But howsoever these things are thus in men's depraved judgments and affections, yet truth, which only doth judge itself, teacheth that the inquiry of truth, which is the love-making or wooing of it, the knowledge of truth, which is the presence of it, and the belief of truth, which is the enjoying of it, is the sovereign good of human nature. The first creature of God, in the works of the days, was the light of the sense; the last was the light of reason; and his sabbath work ever since, is the illumination of his Spirit. First, he breathed light upon the face of the matter or chaos; then he breathed light into the face of man; and still he breatheth and inspireth light into the face of his chosen. The

[2] wine of devils.

poet[3] that beautified the sect[4] that was otherwise inferior to the rest, saith yet excellently well: *It is a pleasure to stand upon the shore, and to see ships tossed upon the sea; a pleasure to stand in the window of a castle, and to see a battle and the adventures thereof below: but no pleasure is comparable to the standing upon the vantage ground of Truth* (a hill not to be commanded, and where the air is always clear and serene), *and to see the errors, and wanderings, and mists, and tempests, in the vale below;* so always that this prospect be with pity, and not with swelling or pride. Certainly, it is heaven upon earth, to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in providence, and turn upon the poles of truth.

To pass from theological and philosophical truth to the truth of civil business: it will be acknowledged, even by those that practise it not, that clear and round[5] dealing is the honour of man's nature; and that mixture of falsehood is like allay in coin of gold and silver, which may make the metal work the better, but it embaseth it. For these winding and crooked courses are the goings of the serpent; which goeth basely upon the belly, and not upon the feet. There is no vice that doth so cover a man with shame as to be found false and perfidious. And therefore Montaigne saith prettily, when he inquired the reason why the word of the lie should be such a disgrace and such an odious charge; saith he, *If it be well weighed, to say that a man lieth is as much to say as that he is brave towards God and a coward towards men.*[6] For a lie faces God, and shrinks from man. Surely the wickedness of falsehood and breach of faith cannot possibly be so highly expressed, as in that it shall be the last peal to call the judgments of God upon

[3] Lucretius.
[4] the Epicureans.
[5] straightforward.
[6] *Essais*, II, 18; a comment from Plutarch.

the generations of men; it being foretold,[7] that when Christ cometh, *he shall not find faith upon the earth.*

Of Death

MEN fear death as children fear to go in the dark; and as that natural fear in children is increased with tales, so is the other. Certainly, the contemplation of death, as the wages of sin, and passage to another world, is holy and religious; but the fear of it, as a tribute due unto nature, is weak. Yet in religious meditations there is sometimes mixture of vanity and of superstition. You shall read in some of the friars' books of mortification, that a man should think with himself what the pain is if he have but his finger's end pressed or tortured, and thereby imagine what the pains of death are, when the whole body is corrupted and dissolved; when many times death passeth with less pain than the torture of a limb; for the most vital parts are not the quickest of sense. And by him that spake only as a philosopher, and natural man, it was well said, *Pompa mortis magis terret quam mors ipsa.*[8] Groans and convulsions, and a discoloured face, and friends weeping, and blacks, and obsequies, and the like, shew death terrible. It is worthy the observing, that there is no passion in the mind of man so weak, but it mates[9] and masters the fear of death; and therefore death is no such terrible enemy when a man hath so many attendants about him that can win the combat of him. Revenge triumphs over death; love slights it; honour aspireth to it; grief flieth to it; fear pre-occupateth[10] it; nay, we read, after Otho the Emperor had slain himself, pity (which is the tenderest of

[7] *Luke* XVIII, 8.
[8] The trappings of death are more fearful than death itself (Seneca).
[9] overcomes (the term in chess).
[10] anticipates.

affections) provoked many to die out of mere compassion to their sovereign, and as the truest sort of followers. Nay, Seneca adds niceness and satiety: *Cogita quamdiu eadem feceris; mori velle, non tantum fortis, aut miser, sed etiam fastidiosus potest.*[11] A man would die, though he were neither valiant nor miserable, only upon a weariness to do the same thing so oft over and over. It is no less worthy to observe how little alteration in good spirits the approaches of death make; for they appear to be the same men till the last instant. Augustus Cæsar died in a compliment: *Livia, conjugii nostri memor, vive et vale;*[12] Tiberius in dissimulation, as Tacitus saith of him: *Iam Tiberium vires et corpus, non dissimulatio, deserebant;*[13] Vespasian in a jest, sitting upon the stool: *Ut puto deus fio;*[14] Galba with a sentence, *Feri, si ex re sit populi Romani,*[15] holding forth his neck; Septimius Severus in dispatch: *Adeste si quid mihi restat agendum;*[16] and the like. Certainly the Stoics bestowed too much cost upon death, and by their great preparations made it appear more fearful. Better, saith he, *qui finem vitæ extremum inter munera ponat Naturæ.*[17] It is as natural to die as to be born; and to a little infant, perhaps, the one is as painful as the other. He that dies in an earnest pursuit is like one that is wounded in hot blood, who, for the time, scarce feels the hurt; and therefore a mind fixed and bent upon somewhat that is good doth avert the dolours of death. But above all, believe it, the sweetest canticle is *Nunc dimittis,*[18] when a man hath obtained worthy ends and expectations. Death hath this also, that it openeth the gate to good fame, and extinguisheth envy: *Extinctus amabitur idem.*[19]

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[11] Think how long you have been doing the same things; a man may wish to die, not so much because he is brave or wretched, as because he is tired of life.
[12] Livia, in remembrance of our wedded life, live on; farewell.
[13] Strength and life were now leaving Tiberius, but not his love of deceit.
[14] I suppose I am becoming a god.
[15] Strike, if it be for the good of the Roman people.
[16] Make haste, if there is anything more for me to do.
[17] Who counts the end of life as one of nature's gifts (Juvenal).
[18] Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace (*Luke* II. 29).
[19] When he is dead, he will be loved.

Of Adversity

IT WAS an high speech of Seneca (after the manner of the Stoics) that, *the good things which belong to prosperity are to be wished; but the good things that belong to adversity are to be admired. Bona rerum secundarum optabilia, adversarum mirabilia.* Certainly, if miracles be the command over nature, they appear most in adversity. It is yet a higher speech of his than the other (much too high for a heathen): *It is true greatness to have in one the frailty of a man, and the security of a god. Vere magnum habere fragilitatem hominis, securitatem dei.* This would have done better in poesy, where transcendences [20] are more allowed. And the poets indeed have been busy with it; for it is in effect the thing which is figured in that strange fiction of the ancient poets, which seemeth not to be without mystery; nay, and to have some approach to the state of a Christian: that *Hercules, when he went to unbind Prometheus* [21] (by whom human nature is represented), *sailed the length of the great ocean in an earthen pot or pitcher;* lively describing Christian resolution, that saileth in the frail bark of the flesh through the waves of the world. But to speak in a mean.[22] The virtue of prosperity is temperance; the virtue of adversity is fortitude; which in morals is the more heroical virtue. Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament; adversity is the blessing of the New; which carrieth the greater benediction, and the clearer revelation of God's favour. Yet even in the Old Testament, if you listen to David's harp, you shall hear as many hearse-like airs as carols; and the pencil of the Holy Ghost hath laboured more in describing the afflictions of Job than the felicities of Salomon. Prosperity is not without many

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[20] elevated or exaggerated expressions.
[21] For giving fire to men. Prometheus was chained by Zeus on Mt. Caucasus and tormented by a vulture. He was released by Hercules.
[22] temperately, simply.

fears and distastes; and adversity is not without comforts and hopes. We see in needleworks and embroideries, it is more pleasing to have a lively work upon a sad and solemn ground, than to have a dark and melancholy work upon a lightsome ground: judge, therefore, of the pleasure of the heart by the pleasure of the eye. Certainly virtue is like precious odours, most fragrant when they are incensed or crushed: for prosperity doth best discover vice; but adversity doth best discover virtue.

Of Marriage and Single Life

HE THAT hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief. Certainly the best works and of greatest merit for the public have proceeded from the unmarried or childless men; which both in affection and means have married and endowed the public. Yet it were great reason that those that have children should have greatest care of future times unto which they know they must transmit their dearest pledges. Some there are, who though they lead a single life, yet their thoughts do end with themselves, and account future times impertinences. Nay, there are some other that account wife and children but as bills of charges. Nay, more, there are some foolish rich covetous men, that take a pride in having no children because they may be thought so much the richer. For perhaps they have heard some talk, *Such a one is a great rich man;* and another except to it, *Yea, but he hath a great charge of children,*—as if it were an abatement to his riches. But the most ordinary cause of a single life is liberty; especially in certain self-pleasing and humorous [23] minds, which are so sensible of every restraint as they will go near to think their girdles

[23] whimsical.

and garters to be bonds and shackles. Unmarried men are best friends, best masters, best servants, but not always best subjects; for they are light to run away; and almost all fugitives are of that condition. A single life doth well with churchmen: for charity will hardly water the ground, where it must first fill a pool. It is indifferent for judges and magistrates: for if they be facile and corrupt, you shall have a servant five times worse than a wife. For soldiers, I find the generals commonly, in their hortatives, put men in mind of their wives and children. And I think the despising of marriage amongst the Turks maketh the vulgar soldiers more base. Certainly, wife and children are a kind of discipline of humanity; and single men, though they be many times more charitable, because their means are less exhaust, yet, on the other side, they are more cruel and hard-hearted, good to make severe inquisitors, because their tenderness is not so oft called upon. Grave natures, led by custom, and therefore constant, are commonly loving husbands; as was said of Ulysses, *vetulam suam prætulit immortalitati.*[24] Chaste women are often proud and froward, as presuming upon the merit of their chastity. It is one of the best bonds, both of chastity and obedience, in the wife, if she think her husband wise; which she will never do if she find him jealous. Wives are young men's mistresses; companions for middle ages; and old men's nurses. So as a man may have a quarrel [25] to marry when he will. But yet he was reputed one of the wise men,[26] that made answer to the question, when a man should marry: *A young man not yet, an elder man not at all.* It is often seen that bad husbands have very good wives; whether it be that it raiseth the price of their husbands' kindness when it comes, or that the wives take a pride in their patience. But this never

[24] He preferred his old wife to immortality (offered to him by Calypso).
[25] pretext.
[26] According to Plutarch, this was Thales, who was one of the "seven wise men" of Greece.

fails if the bad husbands were of their own choosing, against their friends' consent; for then they will be sure to make good their own folly.

Of Great Place

MEN in great place are thrice servants: servants of the sovereign or state, servants of fame, and servants of business. So as they have no freedom, neither in their persons, nor in their actions, nor in their times. It is a strange desire, to seek power and to lose liberty; or to seek power over others and to lose power over a man's self. The rising unto place is laborious, and by pains men come to greater pains; and it is sometimes base, and by indignities men come to dignities. The standing is slippery, and the regress is either a downfall, or at least an eclipse, which is a melancholy thing: *Cum non sis qui fueris, non esse cur velis vivere.*[27] Nay, retire men cannot when they would, neither will they when it were reason; but are impatient of privateness, even in age and sickness, which require the shadow; like old townsmen, that will be still sitting at their street door, though thereby they offer age to scorn. Certainly, great persons had need to borrow other men's opinions to think themselves happy; for if they judge by their own feeling, they cannot find it; but if they think with themselves what other men think of them, and that other men would fain be as they are, then they are happy, as it were by report; when perhaps they find the contrary within. For they are the first that find their own griefs, though they be the last that find their own faults. Certainly, men in great fortunes are strangers to themselves, and while they are in the puzzle of business they have

[27] Since you are no longer what you were, there is no reason why you should wish to keep on living (Cicero).

no time to tend their health, either of body or mind. *Illi mors gravis incubat, qui notus nimis omnibus, ignotus moritur sibi.*[28] In place there is licence to do good and evil, whereof the latter is a curse; for in evil the best condition is not to will, the second not to can.[29] But power to do good is the true and lawful end of aspiring; for good thoughts (though God accept them) yet towards men are little better than good dreams, except they be put in act; and that cannot be without power and place, as the vantage and commanding ground. Merit and good works is the end of man's motion, and conscience[30] of the same is the accomplishment of man's rest; for if a man can be partaker of God's theatre, he shall likewise be partaker of God's rest. *Et conversus Deus, ut aspiceret opera quæ fecerunt manus suæ, vidit quod omnia essent bona nimis;*[31] and then the sabbath. In the discharge of thy place set before thee the best examples, for imitation is a globe of precepts. And after a time set before thee thine own example; and examine thyself strictly, whether thou didst not best at first. Neglect not also the examples of those that have carried themselves ill in the same place; not to set off thyself by taxing their memory, but to direct thyself what to avoid. Reform, therefore, without bravery, or scandal of former times and persons; but yet set it down to thyself, as well to create good precedents as to follow them. Reduce things to the first institution, and observe wherein and how they have degenerate; but yet ask counsel of both times; of the ancient time what is best, and of the latter time what is fittest. Seek to make thy course regular, that men may know beforehand what they may expect; but be not too positive and peremptory, and express thyself well when thou digressest from

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[28] Death weighs heavily upon the one who, too well known to others, dies a stranger to himself (Seneca).

[29] be able.

[30] consciousness.

[31] And God, turning back to behold the works which his hands had made, saw that they were all very good (paraphrased from the Vulgate, *Genesis* I, 31).

thy rule. Preserve the right of thy place, but stir not questions of jurisdiction; and rather assume thy right in silence and *de facto*,[32] than voice it with claims and challenges. Preserve likewise the rights of inferior places, and think it more honour to direct in chief than to be busy in all. Embrace and invite helps and advices touching the execution of thy place, and do not drive away such as bring thee information as meddlers, but accept of them in good part. The vices of authority are chiefly four: delays, corruption, roughness, and facility.[33] For delays, give easy access, keep times appointed, go through with that which is in hand, and interlace not business but of necessity. For corruption, do not only bind thine own hands or thy servants' hands from taking, but bind the hands of suitors also from offering. For integrity used doth the one; but integrity professed and with a manifest detestation of bribery, doth the other. And avoid not only the fault, but the suspicion. Whosoever is found variable and changeth manifestly, without manifest cause, giveth suspicion of corruption. Therefore, always when thou changest thine opinion or course, profess it plainly and declare it, together with the reasons that move thee to change; and do not think to steal [34] it. A servant or a favourite, if he be inward, and no other apparent cause of esteem, is commonly thought but a by-way to close corruption. For roughness, it is a needless cause of discontent; severity breedeth fear, but roughness breedeth hate. Even reproofs from authority ought to be grave, and not taunting. As for facility, it is worse than bribery; for bribes come but now and then; but if importunity or idle respects lead a man, he shall never be without. As Salomon saith, *To respect persons is not good, for such a man will transgress for a piece of bread.*[35] It is most true

[32] as a fact.
[33] lack of firmness.
[34] hide.
[35] cf. *Proverbs* XXVIII, 21.

that was anciently spoken, *A place showeth the man*; and it showeth some to the better and some to the worse. *Omnium consensu capax imperii, nisi imperasset,*[36] saith Tacitus of Galba; but of Vespasian he saith, *Solus imperantium Vespasianus mutatus in melius;*[37] though the one was meant of sufficiency,[38] the other of manners and affection. It is an assured sign of a worthy and generous spirit, whom honor amends. For honor is, or should be, the place of virtue; and as in nature things move violently to their place and calmly in their place, so virtue in ambition is violent, in authority settled and calm. All rising to great place is by a winding stair; and if there be factions, it is good to side a man's self whilst he is in the rising, and to balance himself when he is placed. Use the memory of thy predecessor fairly and tenderly; for if thou dost not, it is a debt will sure be paid when thou art gone. If thou have colleagues, respect them, and rather call them when they look not for it, than exclude them when they have reason to look to be called. Be not too sensible or too remembering of thy place in conversation and private answers to suitors; but let it rather be said, *When he sits in place he is another man.*

Of Travel

TRAVEL, in the younger sort, is a part of education; in the elder, a part of experience. He that travelleth into a country before he hath some entrance into the language, goeth to school, and not to travel. That young men travel under some tutor, or grave servant, I allow well;[39] so that he be such a one that hath the language and hath been in the country before; whereby he may be able to tell them what things are

[36] All men would have said he was fit to rule—if he had never ruled.
[37] Of all the emperors, Vespasian alone changed for the better.
[38] ability.
[39] I approve.

worthy to be seen in the country where they go; what acquaintances they are to seek; what exercises or discipline the place yieldeth. For else young men shall go hooded, and look abroad little. It is a strange thing, that in sea-voyages, where there is nothing to be seen but sky and sea, men should make diaries; but in land-travel, wherein so much is to be observed, for the most part they omit it; as if chance were fitter to be registered than observation. Let diaries therefore be brought in use. The things to be seen and observed are: the courts of princes, specially when they give audience to ambassadors; the courts of justice, while they sit and hear causes, and so of consistories ecclesiastic; the churches and monasteries, with the monuments which are therein extant; the walls and fortifications of cities and towns, and so the havens and harbours; antiquities and ruins; libraries; colleges, disputations, and lectures, where any are; shipping and navies; houses and gardens of state and pleasure, near great cities; armories; arsenals; magazines; exchanges; bourses; warehouses; exercises of horsemanship, fencing, training of soldiers, and the like; comedies, such whereunto the better sort of persons do resort; treasuries of jewels and robes; cabinets and rarities; and, to conclude, whatsoever is memorable in the places where they go. After all which the tutors or servants ought to make diligent inquiry. As for triumphs, masques, feasts, weddings, funerals, capital executions, and such shows, men need not to be put in mind of them; yet are they not to be neglected. If you will have a young man to put his travel into a little room, and in short time to gather much, this you must do. First, as was said, he must have some entrance into the language, before he goeth. Then he must have such a servant or tutor as knoweth the country, as was likewise said. Let him carry with him also some card [40] or book describing the country where he travelleth; which will

[40] chart.

be a good key to his enquiry. Let him keep also a diary. Let him not stay long in one city or town; more or less, as the place deserveth, but not long: nay, when he stayeth in one city or town, let him change his lodging from one end and part of the town to another; which is a great adamant[41] of acquaintance. Let him sequester himself from the company of his countrymen, and diet in such places where there is good company of the nation where he travelleth. Let him, upon his removes from one place to another, procure recommendation to some person of quality residing in the place whither he removeth; that he may use his favour in those things he desireth to see or know. Thus he may abridge his travel with much profit. As for the acquaintance which is to be sought in travel; that which is most of all profitable is acquaintance with the secretaries and employed men of ambassadors; for so in travelling in one country he shall suck the experience of many. Let him also see and visit eminent persons in all kinds, which are of great name abroad; that he may be able to tell how the life agreeth with the fame. For quarrels, they are with care and discretion to be avoided: they are commonly for mistresses, healths, place, and words. And let a man beware how he keepeth company with choleric and quarrelsome persons; for they will engage him into their own quarrels. When a traveller returneth home, let him not leave the countries where he hath travelled altogether behind him, but maintain a correspondence by letters with those of his acquaintance which are of most worth. And let his travel appear rather in his discourse than in his apparel or gesture; and in his discourse let him be rather advised in his answers than forward to tell stories; and let it appear that he doth not change his country manners for those of foreign parts, but only prick in some flowers of that he hath learned abroad into the customs of his own country.

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[41] loadstone, magnet.

Of Friendship

IT HAD been hard for him that spake it to have put more truth and untruth together in a few words, than in that speech, *Whosoever is delighted in solitude is either a wild beast or a god:*[42] for it is most true that a natural and secret hatred and aversation towards society in any man, hath somewhat of the savage beast; but it is most untrue that it should have any character at all of the divine nature; except it proceed, not out of a pleasure in solitude, but out of a love and desire to sequester a man's self for a higher conversation: such as is found to have been falsely and feignedly in some of the heathen; as Epimenides the Candian, Numa the Roman, Empedocles the Sicilian, and Apollonius of Tyana; and truly and really in divers of the ancient hermits and holy fathers of the church. But little do men perceive what solitude is, and how far it extendeth; for a crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love. The Latin adage meeteth with it a little, *Magna civitas, magna solitudo;*[43] because in a great town friends are scattered; so that there is not that fellowship, for the most part, which is in less neighbourhoods. But we may go further, and affirm most truly that it is a mere and miserable solitude to want true friends, without which the world is but a wilderness; and even in this sense also of solitude, whosoever in the frame of his nature and affections is unfit for friendship, he taketh it of the beast, and not from humanity.

A principal fruit of friendship is the ease and discharge of the fulness and swellings of the heart, which passions of all kinds do cause and induce. We know diseases of stoppings and suffocations are the most dangerous in the body; and it is

[42] Aristotle, *Politics.*
[43] A great city is a great solitude.

not much otherwise in the mind: you may take sarza [44] to open the liver, steel to open the spleen, flower of sulphur for the lungs, castoreum[45] for the brain; but no receipt openeth the heart, but a true friend, to whom you may impart griefs, joys, fears, hopes, suspicions, counsels, and whatsoever lieth upon the heart to oppress it, in a kind of civil shrift or confession.

It is a strange thing to observe how high a rate great kings and monarchs do set upon this fruit of friendship whereof we speak: so great, as they purchase it many times at the hazard of their own safety and greatness: for princes, in regard of the distance of their fortune from that of their subjects and servants, cannot gather this fruit, except (to make themselves capable thereof) they raise some persons to be as it were companions and almost equals to themselves, which many times sorteth to inconvenience. The modern languages give unto such persons the name of favourites, or privadoes; as if it were matter of grace, or conversation; but the Roman name attaineth the true use and cause thereof, naming them *participes curarum;*[46] for it is that which tieth the knot. And we see plainly that this hath been done, not by weak and passionate princes only, but by the wisest and most politic that ever reigned, who have oftentimes joined to themselves some of their servants, whom both themselves have called friends, and allowed others likewise to call them in the same manner, using the word which is received between private men.

L. Sylla, when he commanded Rome, raised Pompey (after surnamed the Great) to that height, that Pompey vaunted himself for Sylla's overmatch; for when he had carried the consulship for a friend of his, against the pursuit of Sylla, and that Sylla did a little resent thereat, and began to speak great, Pompey turned upon him again, and in effect bade him be

[44] sarsaparilla.
[45] a secretion of the beaver.
[46] sharers of their sorrows or cares.

quiet; *for that more men adored the sun rising than the sun setting.*[47] With Julius Cæsar, Decimus Brutus had obtained that interest, as he set him down in his testament for heir in remainder after his nephew. And this was the man that had power with him to draw him forth to his death: for when Cæsar [48] would have discharged the senate, in regard of some ill presages, and specially a dream of Calpurnia, this man lifted him gently by the arm out of his chair, telling him he hoped he would not dismiss the senate till his wife had dreamt a better dream; and it seemeth his favour was so great, as Antonius, in a letter which is recited *verbatim* in one of Cicero's Philippics, calleth him *venefica,* "witch"; as if he had enchanted Cæsar. Augustus raised Agrippa (though of mean birth) to that height, as, when he consulted with Mæcenas about the marriage of his daughter Julia, Mæcenas took the liberty to tell him, *that he must either marry his daughter to Agrippa, or take away his life; there was no third way, he had made him so great.*[49] With Tiberius Cæsar, Sejanus had ascended to that height, as they two were termed and reckoned as a pair of friends. Tiberius in a letter to him saith, *Hæc pro amicitiâ nostrâ non occultavi;*[50] and the whole senate dedicated an altar to Friendship, as to a goddess, in respect of the great dearness of friendship between them two. The like or more was between Septimius Severus and Plautianus; for he forced his eldest son to marry the daughter of Plautianus, and would often maintain Plautianus in doing affronts to his son; and did write also in a letter to the senate by these words: *I love the man so well, as I wish he may over-live me.*[51] Now if these princes had been as a Trajan, or a Marcus Aurelius, a man might have thought that this had proceeded of an abundant

[47] Plutarch, *Life of Pompey.*
[48] The anecdote is from Plutarch's *Life of Caesar.*
[49] Dion Cassius' *Roman History.*
[50] Because of our friendship, I have not concealed this (Tacitus).
[51] also from Dion Cassius.

goodness of nature; but being men so wise, for such strength and severity of mind, and so extreme lovers of themselves, as all these were, it proveth most plainly that they found their own felicity (though as great as ever happened to mortal men) but as an half piece, except they mought have a friend to make it entire; and yet, which is more, they were princes that had wives, sons, nephews; and yet all these could not supply the comfort of friendship.

It is not to be forgotten, what Comineus [52] observeth of his first master, Duke Charles the Hardy; namely, that he would communicate his secrets with none, and least of all, those secrets which troubled him most. Whereupon he goeth on and saith that towards his latter time *that closeness did impair and a little perish his understanding.* Surely Comineus mought have made the same judgment also, if it had pleased him, of his second master, Lewis the Eleventh, whose closeness was indeed his tormentor. The parable of Pythagoras is dark, but true: *Cor ne edito,* "Eat not the heart." Certainly, if a man would give it a hard phrase, those that want friends to open themselves unto are cannibals of their own hearts. But one thing is most admirable (wherewith I will conclude this first fruit of friendship), which is, that this communicating of a man's self to his friend works two contrary effects; for it redoubleth joys, and cutteth griefs in halfs: for there is no man that imparteth his joys to his friend, but he joyeth the more; and no man that imparteth his griefs to his friend, but he grieveth the less. So that it is, in truth of operation upon a man's mind, of like virtue as the alchymists use to attribute to their stone for man's body, that it worketh all contrary effects, but still to the good and benefit of nature. But yet, without praying in aid of alchymists, there is a manifest image of this in the ordinary course of nature; for

[52] Philippe de Comines, a French historian, of the fifteenth century.

in bodies, union strengtheneth and cherisheth any natural action, and on the other side weakeneth and dulleth any violent impression; and even so is it of minds.

The second fruit of friendship is healthful and sovereign for the understanding, as the first is for the affections. For friendship maketh indeed a fair day in the affections, from storm and tempests; but it maketh daylight in the understanding, out of darkness and confusion of thoughts. Neither is this to be understood only of faithful counsel, which a man receiveth from his friend; but before you come to that, certain it is that whosoever hath his mind fraught with many thoughts, his wits and understanding do clarify and break up, in the communicating and discoursing with another; he tosseth his thoughts more easily; he marshalleth them more orderly; he seeth how they look when they are turned into words; finally, he waxeth wiser than himself; and that more by an hour's discourse than by a day's meditation. It was well said by Themistocles to the king of Persia, *that speech was like cloth of Arras, opened and put abroad; whereby the imagery doth appear in figure; whereas in thoughts they lie but as in packs.*[53] Neither is this second fruit of friendship, in opening the understanding, restrained only to such friends as are able to give a man counsel (they indeed are best); but even without that, a man learneth of himself, and bringeth his own thoughts to light, and whetteth his wits as against a stone, which itself cuts not. In a word, a man were better relate himself to a statua or picture, than to suffer his thoughts to pass in smother.

Add now, to make this second fruit of friendship complete, that other point, which lieth more open and falleth within vulgar observation: which is faithful counsel from a friend. Heraclitus saith well in one of his enigmas, *Dry light is ever the best.* And certain it is that the light that a man receiveth by counsel

[53] Plutarch, *Life of Themistocles.*

from another is drier and purer than that which cometh from his own understanding and judgment; which is ever infused and drenched in his affections and customs. So as there is as much difference between the counsel that a friend giveth, and that a man giveth himself, as there is between the counsel of a friend and of a flatterer; for there is no such flatterer as is a man's self, and there is no such remedy against flattery of a man's self as the liberty of a friend. Counsel is of two sorts: the one concerning manners, the other concerning business. For the first, the best preservative to keep the mind in health is the faithful admonition of a friend. The calling of a man's self to a strict account is a medicine, sometime, too piercing and corrosive. Reading good books of morality is a little flat and dead. Observing our faults in others is sometimes improper for our case. But the best receipt (best, I say, to work, and best to take) is the admonition of a friend. It is a strange thing to behold what gross errors and extreme absurdities many (especially of the greater sort) do commit, for want of a friend to tell them of them, to the great damage both of their fame and fortune; for, as St. James saith, they are as men *that look sometimes into a glass, and presently forget their own shape and favour.*[54] As for business, a man may think, if he will, that two eyes see no more than one; or that a gamester seeth always more than a looker-on; or that a man in anger is as wise as he that hath said over the four and twenty letters; or that a musket may be shot off as well upon the arm as upon a rest; and such other fond and high imaginations, to think himself all in all. But when all is done, the help of good counsel is that which setteth business straight; and if any man think that he will take counsel, but it shall be by pieces—asking counsel in one business of one man, and in another business of another man—it is well (that is to say, better perhaps than if he asked none at all);

[54] *James* I, 23-24.

but he runneth two dangers: one, that he shall not be faithfully counselled—for it is a rare thing, except it be from a perfect and entire friend, to have counsel given, but such as shall be bowed and crooked to some ends which he hath that giveth it; the other, that he shall have counsel given, hurtful and unsafe (though with good meaning), and mixed partly of mischief and partly of remedy; even as if you would call a physician that is thought good for the cure of the disease you complain of, but is unacquainted with your body; and therefore may put you in way for a present cure, but overthroweth your health in some other kind; and so cure the disease and kill the patient. But a friend that is wholly acquainted with a man's estate will beware, by furthering any present business, how he dasheth upon other inconvenience. And therefore rest not upon scattered counsels; they will rather distract and mislead than settle and direct.

After these two noble fruits of friendship (peace in the affections, and support of the judgment) followeth the last fruit, which is like the pomegranate, full of many kernels; I mean aid, and bearing a part in all actions and occasions. Here the best way to represent to life the manifold use of friendship is to cast and see how many things there are which a man cannot do himself; and then it will appear that it was a sparing speech of the ancients, to say, *that a friend is another himself;* for that a friend is far more than himself. Men have their time, and die many times in desire of some things which they principally take to heart; the bestowing of a child, the finishing of a work, or the like. If a man have a true friend, he may rest almost secure that the care of those things will continue after him; so that a man hath as it were two lives in his desires. A man hath a body, and that body is confined to a place. But where friendship is, all offices of life are as it were granted to him and his deputy; for he may exercise them by his friend. How many things are there which a man cannot, with any face or comeliness, say or do himself! A man can scarce allege his

own merits with modesty, much less extol them; a man cannot sometimes brook to supplicate or beg; and a number of the like. But all these things are graceful in a friend's mouth, which are blushing in a man's own. So again, a man's person hath many proper relations which he cannot put off. A man cannot speak to his son but as a father; to his wife but as a husband; to his enemy but upon terms: whereas a friend may speak as the case requires, and not as it sorteth with the person. But to enumerate these things were endless; I have given the rule, where a man cannot fitly play his own part; if he have not a friend, he may quit the stage.

Of Studies

STUDIES serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight is in privateness, and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in the judgment and disposition of business. For expert men can execute, and perhaps judge of particulars, one by one; but the general counsels, and the plots and marshalling of affairs, come best from those that are learned. To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules is the humour of a scholar. They perfect nature, and are perfected by experience: for natural abilities are like natural plants, that need proyning by study; and studies themselves do give forth directions too much at large, except they be bounded in by experience. Crafty men contemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them: for they teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them and above them, won by observation. Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few

to be chewed and digested: that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts made of them by others; but that would be only in the less important arguments, and the meaner sort of books; else distilled books are like common distilled waters, flashy [55] things. Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man. And therefore, if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit; and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know that he doth not. Histories make men wise; poets witty; the mathematics subtile; natural philosophy deep; moral grave; logic and rhetoric able to contend. *Abeunt studia in mores.*[56] Nay, there is no stond [57] or impediment in the wit, but may be wrought out by fit studies; like as diseases of the body may have appropriate exercises. Bowling is good for the stone and reins;[58] shooting for the lungs and breast; gentle walking for the stomach; riding for the head; and the like. So if a man's wit be wandering, let him study the mathematics; for in demonstrations, if his wit be called away never so little, he must begin again. If his wit be not apt to distinguish or find differences, let him study the schoolmen; for they are *cymini sectores.*[59] If he be not apt to beat over matters, and to call up one thing to prove and illustrate another, let him study the lawyers' cases. So every defect of the mind may have a special receipt.

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[55] insipid.
[56] Studies develop into manners (Ovid).
[57] hindrance.
[58] bladder and kidneys.
[59] hair-splitters (literally, splitters of cumin seed).

Seventeenth Century Character-Writers

Seventeenth Century Character-Writers

THERE IS a very specific classical model for the character-sketches that were written in England in the early and middle years of the seventeenth century. The *Characters* of Theophrastus, a series of descriptions of some of the most conspicuous human qualities, was translated into Latin by Isaac Casaubon in 1592, and this model was soon imitated in the vernacular. This does not imply that character-sketches were unknown in earlier English literature; Chaucer's *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* is of course the greatest collection of all. But it was not until the Theophrastian formula was made available that the "character" was felt to be an end in itself. This plan first defines the quality in question—for example, boorishness, garrulity, cowardice—and then expands the definition by giving typical illustrations of the influence of the quality on human conduct. The tone is light and amusing; the effect is satirical but urbane. The author draws no moral and indulges in no philosophizing.

The Theophrastian model is somewhat modified in its earliest English imitation. Bishop Joseph Hall (1574-1656), as the title of his collection suggests, was distinctly concerned with a didactic purpose: *Characters of Vices and Virtues* (1608) holds up the one set of qualities to scorn, the other to admiration. The second of our triumvirate, Sir Thomas Overbury (1581-1613), is truer to the original type. *Characters* (1614), the title-page of which describes it as by Overbury and "other learned Gentlemen his friends," is largely the courtier's satirical view of various human failings, many of them, naturally, those of the middle class. In "An Affected Traveller" he touches a type that is very familiar in Elizabethan literature, the "Englishman Italianate" of Roger Ascham's scorn, he who, as Shakespeare thought, could never forget that he had "swum in a gondola." Our other selection, "A Fair and Happy Milkmaid" is far less typical; however, its pleasing, though unwonted, sentimentality made Izaak Walton quote it in the *Compleat Angler* and thus preserved it as the best known of all "characters." The third writer of the group, John Earle (1601?-1665), is by common consent the ablest. His *Microcosmographie* (1628) presents the fullest develop-

ment of the Theophrastian "character" in English, and the anticipation of many a satirical sketch in the eighteenth century periodical essay.

The importance of the "character" should not be exaggerated. Its vogue was brief—perhaps, however, less so than has been suggested, since writers of both earlier and later date than the time represented by Hall, Overbury, and Earle have at least some contact with it. Nicholas Breton is a predecessor, while Thomas Fuller, Owen Feltham, and Samuel Butler all represent the art in its decline. That it should decline was inevitable; its strictly limited possibilities in subject and form are at once apparent. The true importance of the "character" is not in itself but in what it anticipated and, in some part, prepared for: the periodical essay and the novel, of the following century.

Of the Distrustful

THE distrustful man hath his heart in his eyes or in his hand; nothing is sure to him but what he sees, what he handles. He is either very simple or very false, and therefore believes not others, because he knows how little himself is worthy of belief. In spiritual things, either God must leave a pawn with him or seek some other creditor. All absent things and unusual have no other but a conditional entertainment; they are strange, if true. If he see two neighbors whisper in his presence, he bids them speak out, and charges them to say no more than they can justify. When he hath committed a message to his servant, he sends a second after him to listen how it is delivered. He is his own secretary, and of his own counsel for what he hath, for what he purposeth. And when he tells over his bags, looks through the keyhole to see if he have any hidden witness, and asks aloud, "Who is there?" when no man hears him. He borrows money when he need not, for fear lest others should borrow of him. He is ever timorous and cowardly, and asks every man's errand at the door ere he opens. After his first sleep he starts up and asks if the furthest gate were barred, and out of a fearful sweat calls up his servant and bolts the door after him, and then studies whether it were better to lie

still and believe, or rise and see. Neither is his heart fuller of fears than his head of strange projects and far-fetched constructions. What means the state, think you, in such an action, and whither tends this course? Learn of me if you know not; the ways of deep policies are secret, and full of unknown windings; that is their act, this will be their issue—so casting beyond the moon, he makes wise and just proceedings suspected. In all his predictions and imaginations he ever lights upon the worst; not what is most likely will fall out, but what is most ill. There is nothing that he takes not with the left hand; no text which his gloss corrupts not. Words, oaths, parchments, seals, are but broken reeds; these shall never deceive him, he loves no payments but real. If but one in an age have miscarried by a rare casualty, he misdoubts the same event. If but a tile fallen from an high roof have brained a passenger, or the breaking of a coach-wheel have endangered the burden, he swears he will keep at home, or take him to his horse. He dares not come to church for fear of the crowd, nor spare the Sabbath's labor for fear of want, nor come near the Parliament house, because it should have been blown up. What might have been affects him as much as what will be. Argue, vow, protest, swear, he hears thee, and believes himself. He is a sceptic, and dare hardly give credit to his senses, which he hath often arraigned of false intelligence. He so lives, as if he thought all the world were thieves, and were not sure whether himself were one. He is uncharitable in his censures, unquiet in his fears, bad enough always, but in his own opinion much worse than he is. [*Hall*]

An Affected Traveller

IS A speaking fashion; he hath taken pains to be ridiculous, and hath seen more than he hath perceived. His attire speaks French or Italian, and his gait cries, "Behold me." He

censures all things by countenances and shrugs, and speaks his own language with shame and lisping; he will choke rather than confess beer good drink, and his pick-tooth is a main part of his behavior. He chooseth rather to be counted a spy than not a politician, and maintains his reputation by naming great men familiarly. He chooseth rather to tell lies than not wonders, and talks with men singly; his discourse sounds big, but means nothing; and his boy is bound to admire him howsoever. He comes still from great personages, but goes with mean. He takes occasion to show jewels given him in regard of his virtue, that were bought in St. Martin's;[1] and not long after having, with a mountebank's method, pronounced them worth thousands, impawneth them for a few shillings. Upon festival days he goes to court, and salutes without resaluting; at night in an ordinary he canvasseth the business in hand, and seems as conversant with all intents and plots as if he begot them. His extraordinary account of men is, first to tell them the ends of all matters of consequence, and then to borrow money of them; he offers courtesies to show them, rather than himself, humble. He disdains all things above his reach, and preferreth all countries before his own. He imputeth his want and poverty to the ignorance of the time, not his own unworthiness; and concludes his discourse with half a period, or a word, and leaves the rest to imagination. In a word, his religion is fashion, and both body and soul are governed by fame; he loves most voices above truth. [*Overbury*]

A Fair and Happy Milkmaid

IS A country wench, that is so far from making herself beautiful by art that one look of hers is able to put all face-physic out of countenance. She knows a fair look is but a dumb orator

[1] St. Martin's-le-grand, famous for its jewelry and laces.

to commend virtue, therefore minds it not. All her excellencies stand in her so silently, as if they had stolen upon her without her knowledge. The lining of her apparel (which is herself) is far better than outsides of tissue:[2] for though she be not arrayed in the spoil of the silkworm, she is decked in innocency, a far better wearing. She doth not, with lying long abed, spoil both her complexion and conditions; nature hath taught her too immoderate sleep is rust to the soul; she rises therefore with chanticleer, her dame's cock, and at night makes the lamb her curfew. In milking a cow, and straining the teats through her fingers, it seems that so sweet a milk-press makes the milk the whiter and sweeter; for never came almond glove or aromatic ointment on her palm to taint it. The golden ears of corn fall and kiss her feet when she reaps them, as if they wished to be bound and led prisoners by the same hand that felled them. Her breath is her own, which scents all the year long of June, like a new-made haycock. She makes her hand hard with labour, and her heart soft with pity; and when winter evenings fall early (sitting at her merry wheel) she sings a defiance to the giddy wheel of fortune. She doth all things with so sweet a grace, it seems ignorance will not suffer her to do ill, being her mind is to do well. She bestows her year's wages at next fair; and in choosing her garments counts no bravery in the world like decency. The garden and beehive are all her physic and chirurgery, and she lives the longer for it. She dares go alone, and unfold sheep in the night, and fears no manner of ill, because she means none; yet to say truth, she is never alone, for she is still accompanied with old songs, honest thoughts, and prayers, but short ones; yet they have their efficacy, in that they are not palled[3] with ensuing idle cogitations. Lastly, her dreams are so chaste that she dare tell them; only a Friday's dream is all her super-

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[2] fine apparel.
[3] weakened.

stition; that she conceals for fear of anger. Thus lives she, and all her care is she may die in the springtime, to have store of flowers stuck upon her winding-sheet. [*Formerly attributed to Overbury, but now to John Webster, the dramatist.*]

A Vulgar-Spirited Man

IS ONE of the herd of the world. One that follows merely the common cry, and makes it louder by one. A man that loves none but who are publicly affected, and he will not be wiser than the rest of the town. That never owns a friend after an ill name, or some general imputation, though he knows it most unworthy. That opposes to reason, "thus men say;" and "thus most do;" and "thus the world goes;" and thinks this enough to poise the other. That worships men in place, and those only; and thinks all a great man speaks oracles. Much taken with my lord's jest, and repeats you it all to a syllable. One that justifies nothing out of fashion, nor any opinion out of the applauded way. That thinks certainly all Spaniards and Jesuits very villains, and is still cursing the Pope and Spinola.[4] One that thinks the gravest cassock the best scholar; and the best clothes the finest man. That is taken only with broad and obscene wit, and hisses any thing too deep for him. That cries, Chaucer for his money above all our English poets, because the voice has gone so, and he has read none. That is much ravished with such a nobleman's courtesy, and would venture his life for him, because he put off his hat. One that is foremost still to kiss the king's hand, and cries, "God bless his majesty!" loudest. That rails on all men condemned and out of favor, and the first that says "away with the traitors!"—yet struck with much ruth at executions; and for pity to see a man die, could kill the

[4] a general under Philip III of Spain.

hangman. That comes to London to see it, and the pretty things in it, and, the chief cause of his journey, the bears. That measures the happiness of the kingdom by the cheapness of corn, and conceives no harm of state, but ill trading. Within this compass, too, come those that are too much wedged into the world, and have no lifting thoughts above those things; that call to thrive, to do well; and preferment only the grace of God. That aim all studies at this mark, and show you poor scholars as an example to take heed by. That think the prison and want a judgment for some sin, and never like well hereafter of a jail-bird. That know no other content but wealth, bravery, and the town-pleasures; that think all else but idle speculation, and the philosophers madmen. In short, men that are carried away with all outwardnesses, shows, appearances, the stream, the people; for there is no man of worth but has a piece of singularity, and scorns something. [*Earle*]

A Mere Formal Man

IS SOMEWHAT more than the shape of a man; for he has his length, breadth, and colour. When you have seen his outside, you have looked through him, and need employ your discovery no farther. His reason is merely example, and his action is not guided by his understanding; but he sees other men do thus, and he follows them. He is a negative, for we cannot call him a wise man, but not a fool; nor an honest man, but not a knave; nor a Protestant, but not a Papist. The chief burden of his brain is the carriage of his body and the setting of his face in a good frame; which he performs the better, because he is not disjointed with other meditations. His religion is a good quiet subject, and he prays as he swears, in the phrase of the land. He is a fair guest, and a fair inviter, and can excuse his good cheer in the accustomed apology. He has some faculty

in mangling of a rabbit, and the distribution of his morsel to a neighbour's trencher. He apprehends a jest by seeing men smile, and laughs orderly himself, when it comes to his turn. His businesses with his friends are to visit them, and whilst the business is no more, he can perform this well enough. His discourse is the news that he hath gathered in his walk, and for other matters his discretion is, that he will only what he can; that is, say nothing. His life is like one that runs to the church-walk, to take a turn or two, and so passes. He hath stayed in the world to fill a number; and when he is gone, there wants one, and there's an end. [*Earle*]

Milton

Milton

(1608-1674)

THE LIFE AND WORK of John Milton divide inevitably into three periods, of which the twenty years of the Civil War and the Commonwealth, 1640-1660, form the middle. To the first, belong the minor poems; to the second, the prose; to the third, the major poems. If, as has been suggested, the career is to be thought of as a drama in three acts, the first, according to the usual view, might be entitled "Preparation," the second "Interruption," and the third "Achievement." The implication, of course, is that Milton's contact with "the dust and heat" of the political arena meant an unfortunate postponement, and a tardy realization, of his wish "to leave something so written to aftertimes as they should not willingly let it die." It is reasonable, however, to qualify this view: if Milton's prose, on the whole, bears the marks of too great haste and too great bitterness, it is, at its best, quite worthy of the pen of the "most intense of English poets." And it *is* at its best in *Areopagitica.*

According to Dodwen's acute generalization, all Milton's poetry is on the theme of obedience, all his prose on that of liberty. In Milton's own phrase, there are three forms of liberty—ecclesiastical, domestic, and civil—and, in his prose writing, he has touched them all. The first reason for the survival of *Areopagitica,* in a place apart from, and higher than, all his other prose works is doubtless that it treats a theme that has just as lively an interest in the twentieth century as in the seventeenth. We take a little too much for granted the assumption that we now enjoy complete liberty of thought and expression. Professor Walker has made a curiously prophetic remark on the subject: "The battle of freedom may have to be fought again, and, if it has, the *Areopagitica* will become, not merely an interesting landmark of history and a glorious piece of eloquence, but a possession of practical value and importance. The 'organ voice' of Milton will not easily be drowned." These words were written in 1914. How soon was the truth of the prophecy demonstrated! The years of the war and those directly following have furnished abundant illustration of the limitations that still hedge the freedom of the individual.

The immediate purpose of *Areopagitica* was to protest against a decree of Parliament, promulgated in June, 1643, reëstablishing a censorship of the press which had been allowed to lapse. This use by the Presbyterian faction of a weapon that had formerly been used against it, did not commend itself to Milton, though he was at that time a loyal Parliamentarian, as a proper proceeding for a free commonwealth. His aim was to show both that the measure was a futile gesture and that, in general, to impede the liberty of the individual is to impose an unwise and unjust restraint upon the progress of the individual and the nation. In form, the work is, to use a term suggested by the analogy in the field of drama, a "closet oration"; that is to say, it is a speech not intended to be heard but, since the author had no access to the floor of Parliament, to be read. It is, of course, not a familiar essay in any ordinary sense of the term, but its intensely personal quality and the perennial appropriateness of its theme seem to justify its inclusion here. As to style, it may be said, perhaps, of some passages that they are magnificent, but not English; Latinisms in vocabulary and Latin inversions of the English word order are abundant. It is to be remembered that it is the prose of the Latin secretary of Cromwell's government, but also that it is the prose of a poet, and a great poet. And if, in writing prose, Milton had, as he said, "but the use of my left hand," it is still evident that the sonorous grandeurs of his verse find splendid echoes in his prose. One notices, however, that some of the best passages—the praise of books, for example, and the plea that the individual be allowed to choose his own reading—are far from involved; and that Milton can command the eloquence of simplicity as well as grandeur. Through it all, the reader can scarcely miss a sense of the magnificent individualism, the greatness of soul, of its author. He may well exclaim, with Christopher Morley, "To read that great outburst of splendid anger ennobles the meanest of us simply because we belong to the same species of animal as Milton."

Areopagitica

A Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing, to the Parliament of England

THEY who to states and governors of the Commonwealth direct their speech, High Court of Parliament, or, wanting such access in a private condition, write that which they foresee

may advance the public good; I suppose them, as at the beginning of no mean endeavour, not a little altered[1] and moved inwardly in their minds: some with doubt of what will be the success,[2] others with fear of what will be the censure[3]; some with hope, others with confidence of what they have to speak. And me perhaps each of these dispositions, as the subject was whereon I entered, may have at other times variously affected; and likely might in these foremost expressions now also disclose which of them swayed most, but that the very attempt of this address thus made, and the thought of whom it hath recourse to, hath got the power within me to a passion, far more welcome than incidental to a preface.

Which though I stay not to confess ere any ask, I shall be blameless, if it be no other than the joy and gratulation which it brings to all who wish and promote their country's liberty; whereof this whole discourse proposed will be a certain testimony, if not a trophy. For this is not the liberty which we can hope, that no grievance ever should arise in the Commonwealth —that let no man in this world expect; but when complaints are freely heard, deeply considered and speedily reformed, then is the utmost bound of civil liberty attained that wise men look for. To which if I now manifest by the very sound of this which I shall utter, that we are already in good part arrived, and yet from such a steep disadvantage of tyranny and superstition grounded into our principles as was beyond the manhood of a Roman recovery,[4] it will be attributed first, as is most due, to the strong assistance of God our deliverer, next to your faithful guidance and undaunted wisdom, Lords and Commons of England. Neither is it in God's esteem the diminution of His glory, when honourable things are spoken of good men and

[1] disturbed.
[2] consequence.
[3] judgment.
[4] England succeeded in recovering from the evil conditions of the Stuart dynasty; Rome, in a similar case, did not.

worthy magistrates; which if I now first should begin to do, after so fair a progress of your laudable deeds, and such a long obligement upon the whole realm to your indefatigable virtues, I might be justly reckoned among the tardiest, and the unwillingest of them that praise ye.

Nevertheless there being three principal things, without which all praising is but courtship and flattery: First, when that only is praised which is solidly worth praise; next, when greatest likelihoods are brought that such things are truly and really in those persons to whom they are ascribed; the other, when he who praises, by showing that such his actual persuasion is of whom he writes, can demonstrate that he flatters not; the former two of these I have heretofore endeavoured, rescuing the employment from him [5] who went about to impair your merits with a trivial and malignant encomium; the latter as belonging chiefly to mine own acquittal, that whom I so extolled I did not flatter, hath been reserved opportunely to this occasion. For he who freely magnifies what hath been nobly done, and fears not to declare as freely what might be done better, gives ye the best covenant of his fidelity; and that his loyalest affection and his hope waits on your proceedings. His highest praising is not flattery, and his plainest advice is a kind of praising. For though I should affirm and hold by argument, that it would fare better with truth, with learning and the Commonwealth, if one of your published Orders, which I should name, were called in; yet at the same time it could not but much redound to the lustre of your mild and equal government, whenas private persons are hereby animated to think ye better pleased with public advice, than other statists [6] have been delighted heretofore with public flattery. And men will then see what difference there is between

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[5] Bishop Joseph Hall, defender of episcopacy, as well as writer of "characters" (cf. pp. 71-73), who had written, in 1641, *A Humble Remonstrance to the High Court of Parliament*.

[6] statesmen.

the magnanimity of a triennial Parliament, and that jealous haughtiness of prelates and Cabin Counsellors that usurped of late, whenas they shall observe ye in the midst of your victories and successes more gently brooking written exceptions against a voted Order than other Courts, which had produced nothing worth memory but the weak ostentation of wealth, would have endured the least signified dislike at any sudden Proclamation.

If I should thus far presume upon the meek demeanour of your civil and gentle greatness, Lords and Commons, as what your published Order hath directly said, that to gainsay, I might defend myself with ease, if any should accuse me of being new or insolent, did they but know how much better I find ye esteem it to imitate the old and elegant humanity of Greece, than the barbaric pride of a Hunnish and Norwegian stateliness. And out of those ages, to whose polite wisdom and letters we owe that we are not yet Goths and Jutlanders, I could name him [7] who from his private house wrote that discourse to the Parliament of Athens, that persuades them to change the form of democraty which was then established. Such honour was done in those days to men who professed the study of wisdom and eloquence, not only in their own country, but in other lands, that cities and signiories heard them gladly, and with great respect, if they had aught in public to admonish the state. Thus did Dion Prusæus, a stranger and a private orator, counsel the Rhodians against a former edict; and I abound with other like examples, which to set here would be superfluous.

But if from the industry of a life wholly dedicated to studious labours, and those natural endowments haply not the worse for two and fifty degrees of northern latitude, so much must be derogated, as to count me not equal to any of those who had this privilege, I would obtain to be thought not so inferior, as

[7] Isocrates, whose address to the Areopagus of Athens affords a classical precedent, and suggests a title, for the present discourse.

yourselves are superior to the most of them who received their counsel: and how far you excel them, be assured, Lords and Commons, there can no greater testimony appear, than when your prudent spirit acknowledges and obeys the voice of reason from what quarter soever it be heard speaking; and renders ye as willing to repeal any Act of your own setting forth as any set forth by your predecessors.

If ye be thus resolved, as it were injury to think ye were not, I know not what should withhold me from presenting ye with a fit instance wherein to show both that love of truth which ye eminently profess, and that uprightness of your judgment which is not wont to be partial to yourselves; by judging over again that Order which ye have ordained to regulate Printing: "That no book, pamphlet, or paper shall be henceforth printed, unless the same be first approved and licensed by such, or at least one of such, as shall be thereto appointed." For that part which preserves justly every man's copy [8] to himself, or provides for the poor, I touch not, only wish they be not made pretences to abuse and persecute honest and painful men, who offend not in either of these particulars. But that other clause of Licensing Books, which we thought had died with his brother quadragesimal [9] and matrimonial [10] when the prelates expired,[11] I shall now attend with such a homily, as shall lay before ye, first the inventors of it to be those whom ye will be loth to own; next what is to be thought in general of reading, whatever sort the books be; and that this Order avails nothing to the suppressing of scandalous, seditious, and libellous books, which were mainly intended to be suppressed. Last, that it will be primely to the discouragement of all learning, and the stop of Truth, not

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[8] copyright.
[9] Lenten; the reference is to regulating the observance of fast days in Lent.
[10] Milton, holding marriage to be the concern of the state only, consistently opposed regulation of it by the church.
[11] The bishops were excluded from Parliament early in 1642, though episcopacy was not legally abolished until 1646.

only by disexercising and blunting our abilities in what we know already, but by hindering and cropping the discovery that might be yet further made both in religious and civil Wisdom.

I deny not, but that it is of greatest concernment in the Church and Commonwealth, to have a vigilant eye how books demean themselves as well as men; and thereafter to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors. For books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous dragon's teeth;[12] and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book. Who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were in the eye.[13] Many a man lives a burden to the earth; but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life. 'Tis true, no age can restore a life, whereof perhaps there is no great loss; and revolutions of ages do not oft recover the loss of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole nations fare the worse.

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[The first argument, here omitted, points out that the antecedents of the licensing ordinance are enough to discredit it in the eyes of Englishmen; that censorship before publication was unknown to Greece and Rome, where, after publication, only libelous and blasphemous books were subject to suppression, and their authors to punishment; and that a general censorship of books began only with the Inquisition.]

[12] in the story of Cadmus, or that of Jason.
[13] i.e., in the mind, the mental eye.

But some will say, What though the inventors were bad, the thing for all that may be good? It may be so; yet if that thing be no such deep invention, but obvious, and easy for any man to light on, and yet best and wisest commonwealths through all ages and occasions have forborne to use it, and falsest seducers and oppressors of men were the first who took it up, and to no other purpose but to obstruct and hinder the first approach of Reformation; I am of those who believe it will be a harder alchymy than Lullius [14] ever knew, to sublimate any good use out of such an invention. Yet this only is what I request to gain from this reason, that it may be held a dangerous and suspicious fruit, as certainly it deserves, for the tree that bore it, until I can dissect one by one the properties it has. But I have first to finish, as was propounded, what is to be thought in general of reading books, whatever sort they be, and whether be more the benefit or the harm that thence proceeds?

[The above paragraph is transitional to the second argument, that there should be no restriction upon the freedom of the individual to choose his own reading. The following paragraphs deal with this point.]

. . . . . .

For books are as meats and viands are; some of good, some of evil substance; and yet God, in that unapocryphal vision, said without exception, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat," [15] leaving the choice to each man's discretion. Wholesome meats to a vitiated stomach differ little or nothing from unwholesome; and best books to a naughty mind are not unappliable to occasions of evil. Bad meats will scarce breed good nourishment in the healthiest concoction; but herein the difference is of bad books, that they to a discreet and judicious reader serve in many respects to discover, to confute, to forewarn, and to illustrate. Whereof what better witness can ye expect I should produce,

[14] Raymond Lully, an alchemist of the thirteenth century.
[15] *Acts* X, 9-16.

than one of your own now sitting in Parliament, the chief of learned men reputed in this land, Mr. Selden; whose volume of natural and national laws proves, not only by great authorities brought together, but by exquisite reasons and theorems almost mathematically demonstrative, that all opinions, yea errors, known, read, and collated, are of main service and assistance toward the speedy attainment of what is truest. I conceive, therefore, that when God did enlarge the universal diet of man's body, saving ever the rules of temperance, He then also, as before, left arbitrary the dieting and repasting of our minds; as wherein every mature man might have to exercise his own leading capacity.

How great a virtue is temperance, how much of moment through the whole life of man! Yet God commits the managing so great a trust, without particular law or prescription, wholly to the demeanour of every grown man. And therefore when He Himself tabled the Jews from heaven, that omer,[16] which was every man's daily portion of manna, is computed to have been more than might have well sufficed the heartiest feeder thrice as many meals. For those actions which enter into a man, rather than issue out of him, and therefore defile not, God uses not to captivate under a perpetual childhood of prescription, but trusts him with the gift of reason to be his own chooser; there were but little work left for preaching, if law and compulsion should grow so fast upon those things which heretofore were governed only by exhortation. Solomon[17] informs us, that much reading is a weariness to the flesh; but neither he nor other inspired author tells us that such or such reading is unlawful: yet certainly had God thought good to limit us herein, it had been much more expedient to have told us what was unlawful than what was wearisome. As for the burning of those Ephesian books by

[16] cf. *Exodus* XVI, 16-36.
[17] cf. *Ecclesiastes* XII, 12.

St. Paul's converts;[18] 'tis replied the books were magic, the Syriac so renders them. It was a private act, a voluntary act, and leaves us to a voluntary imitation: the men in remorse burnt those books which were their own; the magistrate by this example is not appointed; these men practised the books, another might perhaps have read them in some sort usefully.

Good and evil we know in the field of this world grow up together almost inseparably; and the knowledge of good is so involved and interwoven with the knowledge of evil, and in so many cunning resemblances hardly to be discerned, that those confused seeds which were imposed upon Psyche as an incessant labour to cull out, and sort asunder, were not more intermixed. It was from out the rind of one apple tasted, that the knowledge of good and evil, as two twins cleaving together, leaped forth into the world. And perhaps this is that doom which Adam fell into of knowing good and evil, that is to say of knowing good by evil.

As, therefore, the state of man now is; what wisdom can there be to choose, what continence to forbear without the knowledge of evil? He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true wayfaring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world; we bring impurity much rather; that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary. That virtue, therefore, which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evil, and knows not the utmost that vice promises to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank virtue, not a pure; her whiteness is but an ex-

[18] *Acts* XIX, 19.

cremental [19] whiteness. Which was the reason why our sage and serious poet Spenser, whom I dare be known to think a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas,[20] describing true temperance under the person of Guion,[21] brings him in with his palmer through the cave of Mammon, and the bower of earthly bliss, that he might see and know, and yet abtsain.

Since, therefore, the knowledge and survey of vice is in this world so necessary to the constituting of human virtue, and the scanning of error to the confirmation of truth, how can we more safely, and with less danger, scout into the regions of sin and falsity than by reading all manner of tractates and hearing all manner of reason? And this is the benefit which may be had of books promiscuously read.

[The third argument, from which the following passage is taken, is that censorship, of all kinds, is difficult to administer, and always ineffective.]

. . . . . .

If we think to regulate printing, thereby to rectify manners, we must regulate all recreations and pastimes, all that is delightful to man. No music must be heard, no song be set or sung, but what is grave and Doric.[22] There must be licensing dancers, that no gesture, motion, or deportment be taught our youth but what by their allowance shall be thought honest; for such Plato [23] was provided of; it will ask more than the work of twenty licensers to examine all the lutes, the violins, and the guitars in every house; they must not be suffered to prattle as they do, but must be licensed what they may say. And who shall silence all the airs and madrigals that whisper softness in chambers? The windows also, and the balconies must be thought

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[19] superficial.
[20] famous medieval schoolmen.
[21] in the second book of the *Faery Queen*.
[22] severe.
[23] in his *Laws*, to which Milton has just referred.

on; there are shrewd [24] books, with dangerous frontispieces, set to sale; who shall prohibit them, shall twenty licensers? The villages also must have their visitors to inquire what lectures the bagpipe and the rebeck reads, even to the ballatry [25] and the gamut of every municipal fiddler, for these are the countryman's Arcadias,[26] and his Monte Mayors.[27]

Next, what more national corruption, for which England hears ill abroad, than household gluttony: who shall be the rectors of our daily rioting? And what shall be done to inhibit the multitudes that frequent those houses where drunkenness is sold and harboured? Our garments also should be referred to the licensing of some more sober workmasters to see them cut into a less wanton garb. Who shall regulate all the mixed conversation of our youth, male and female together, as is the fashion of this country? Who shall still appoint what shall be discoursed, what presumed, and no further? Lastly, who shall forbid and separate all idle resort, all evil company? These things will be, and must be; but how they shall be least hurtful, how least enticing, herein consists the grave and governing wisdom of a state.

To sequester out of the world into Atlantic and Utopian [28] polities, which never can be drawn into use, will not mend our condition; but to ordain wisely as in this world of evil, in the midst whereof God hath placed us unavoidably. Nor is it Plato's licensing of books will do this, which necessarily pulls along with it so many other kinds of licensing, as will make us all both ridiculous and weary, and yet frustrate; but those unwritten, or at least unconstraining, laws of virtuous education,

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[24] mischievous.
[25] ballad poetry.
[26] Sidney's pastoral romance.
[27] Jorge de Montemayor was the author of the Spanish work which began the great vogue of the prose pastoral romance in various countries of Europe in the latter part of the sixteenth century.
[28] terms for ideal commonwealths, from Plato's fabulous island of Atlantis and Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*.

religious and civil nurture, which Plato there mentions as the bonds and ligaments of the commonwealth, the pillars and the sustainers of every written statute; these they be which will bear chief sway in such matters as these, when all licensing will be easily eluded. Impunity and remissness, for certain, are the bane of a commonwealth; but here the great art lies, to discern in what the law is to bid restraint and punishment, and in what things persuasion only is to work.

If every action, which is good or evil in man at ripe years, were to be under pittance and prescription and compulsion, what were virtue but a name, what praise could be then due to well-doing, what gramercy [29] to be sober, just, or continent? Many there be that complain of Divine Providence for suffering Adam to transgress; foolish tongues! When God gave him reason, He gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had been else a mere artificial Adam, such an Adam as he is in the motions.[30] We ourselves esteem not of that obedience, or love, or gift, which is of force; God therefore left him free, set before him a provoking object; ever almost in his eyes; herein consisted his merit, herein the right of his reward, the praise of his abstinence. Wherefore did He create passions within us, pleasures round about us, but that these rightly tempered are the very ingredients of virtue?

They are not skilful considerers of human things, who imagine to remove sin by removing the matter of sin; for, besides that it is a huge heap increasing under the very act of diminishing, though some part of it may for a time be withdrawn from some persons, it cannot from all, in such a universal thing as books are; and when this is done, yet the sin remains entire. Though ye take from a covetous man all his treasure, he has yet one jewel left, ye cannot bereave him of his covetousness. Banish

[29] thanks.
[30] puppet shows.

all objects of lust, shut up all youth into the severest discipline that can be exercised in any hermitage, ye cannot make them chaste, that came not thither so: such great care and wisdom is required to the right managing of this point. Suppose we could expel sin by this means; look how much we thus expel of sin, so much we expel of virtue: for the matter of them both is the same; remove that, and ye remove them both alike.

This justifies the high providence of God, Who, though He commands us temperance, justice, continence, yet pours out before us, even to a profuseness, all desirable things, and gives us minds that can wander beyond all limit and satiety. Why should we then affect a rigour contrary to the manner of God and of nature, by abridging or scanting those means, which books freely permitted are, both to the trial of virtue and the exercise of truth? It would be better done, to learn that the law must needs be frivolous, which goes to restrain things, uncertainly and yet equally working to good and to evil. And were I the chooser, a dram of well-doing should be preferred before many times as much the forcible hindrance of evil-doing. For God sure esteems the growth and completing of one virtuous person more than the restraint of ten vicious.

And albeit whatever thing we hear or see, sitting, walking, travelling, or conversing, may be fitly called our book, and is of the same effect that writings are, yet grant the thing to be prohibited were only books, it appears that this order hitherto is far insufficient to the end which it intends. Do we not see, not once or oftener, but weekly, that continued court-libel [31] against the Parliament and City, printed, as the wet sheets can witness, and dispersed among us, for all that licensing can do? Yet this is the prime service a man would think, wherein this Order should give proof of itself. If it were executed, you'll say. But

[31] a violently royalist weekly, called the *Mercurius Aulicus*.

certain, if execution be remiss or blindfold now, and in this particular, what will it be hereafter and in other books?

If then the Order shall not be vain and frustrate, behold a new labour, Lords and Commons; ye must repeal and proscribe all scandalous and unlicensed books already printed and divulged; after ye have drawn them up into a list, that all may know which are condemned, and which not; and ordain that no foreign books be delivered out of custody, till they have been read over. This office will require the whole time of not a few overseers, and those no vulgar men. There be also books which are partly useful and excellent, partly culpable and pernicious; this work will ask as many more officials, to make expurgations and expunctions, that the Commonwealth of Learning be not damnified. In fine, when the multitude of books increase upon their hands, ye must be fain to catalogue all those printers who are found frequently offending, and forbid the importation of their whole suspected typography. In a word, that this your Order may be exact, and not deficient, ye must reform it perfectly according to the model of Trent and Seville,[32] which I know ye abhor to do.

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[In the following paragraph, Milton summarizes the third argument, and introduces the fourth: effective or not, censorship is iniquitous, because it means the suppression of truth. The remaining extracts come from this division of the tract.]

I lastly proceed from the no good it can do, to the manifest hurt it causes, in being first the greatest discouragement and affront that can be offered to learning, and to learned men.

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Well knows he who uses to consider, that our faith and

[32] i.e., follow Catholic tactics.

knowledge thrives by exercise, as well as our limbs and complexion.[33] Truth is compared in Scripture to a streaming fountain; if her waters flow not in a perpetual progression, they sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition. A man may be a heretic in the truth; and if he believe things only because his Pastor says so, or the Assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy. There is not any burden that some would gladlier post off to another than the charge and care of their religion. There be—who knows not that there be?—of Protestants and professors [34] who live and die in as arrant an implicit faith as any lay Papist of Loretto.[35]

A wealthy man, addicted to his pleasure and to his profits, finds religion to be a traffic so entangled, and of so many piddling accounts, that of all mysteries [36] he cannot skill [37] to keep a stock going upon that trade. What should he do? Fain he would have the name to be religious; fain he would bear up with his neighbours in that. What does he, therefore, but resolve to give over toiling, and to find himself out some factor, to whose care and credit he may commit the whole managing of his religious affairs? Some Divine of note and estimation that must be. To him he adheres, resigns the whole warehouse of his religion, with all the locks and keys, into his custody; and indeed makes the very person of that man his religion; esteems his associating with him a sufficient evidence and commendatory of his own piety. So that a man may say his religion is now no more within himself, but is become a dividual [38] movable, and goes and comes near him, according as that good man

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[33] constitution.
[34] The term means either Protestants in general, as opposed to Roman Catholics, or Puritans.
[35] a town in eastern Italy, and a famous shrine. In its cathedral is the house described as the birthplace of the Virgin Mary, miraculously transported thither.
[36] occupations.
[37] manage.
[38] which can be separated from him.

frequents the house. He entertains him, gives him gifts, feasts him, lodges him; his religion comes home at night, prays, is liberally supped, and sumptuously laid to sleep, rises, is saluted, and after the malmsey, or some well-spiced brewage, and better breakfasted than He whose morning appetite would have gladly fed on green figs between Bethany and Jerusalem, his religion walks abroad at eight, and leaves his kind entertainer in the shop trading all day without his religion.

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There is yet behind of what I proposed to lay open, the incredible loss and detriment that this plot of licensing puts us to; more than if some enemy at sea should stop up all our havens and ports and creeks, it hinders and retards the importation of our richest Merchandise, Truth; nay, it was first established and put in practice by Antichristian malice and mystery on set purpose to extinguish, if it were possible, the light of Reformation, and to settle [39] falsehood; little differing from that policy wherewith the Turk upholds his Alcoran, by the prohibition of Printing. 'Tis not denied, but gladly confessed, we are to send our thanks and vows to Heaven louder than most of nations, for that great measure of Truth which we enjoy, especially in those main points between us and the Pope, with his appurtenances the Prelates; but he who thinks we are to pitch our tent here, and have attained the utmost prospect of reformation that the mortal glass wherein we contemplate can show us, till we come to beatific vision, that man by this very opinion declares that he is yet far short of Truth.

Truth indeed came once into the world with her Divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on; but when He ascended, and His Apostles after Him were laid asleep, then straight arose a wicked race of deceivers, who, as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhon with his conspirators,

[39] fix.

how they dealt with the good Osiris, took the virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb, still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, Lords and Commons, nor ever shall do, till her Master's second coming; He shall bring together every joint and member, and shall mould them into an immortal feature [40] of loveliness and perfection. Suffer not these licensing prohibitions to stand at every place of opportunity, forbidding and disturbing them that continue seeking, that continue to do our obsequies to the torn body of our martyred saint.

We boast our light; but if we look not wisely on the Sun itself, it smites us into darkness. Who can discern those planets that are oft combust,[41] and those stars of brightest magnitude that rise and set with the Sun, until the opposite motion of their orbs bring them to such a place in the firmament, where they may be seen evening or morning? The light which we have gained was given us, not to be ever staring on, but by it to discover onward things more remote from our knowledge. It is not the unfrocking of a priest, the unmitring of a bishop, and the removing him from off the Presbyterian shoulders, that will make us a happy Nation. No, if other things as great in the Church, and in the rule of life both economical and political, be not looked into and reformed, we have looked so long upon the blaze that Zuinglius [42] and Calvin hath beaconed up to us, that we are stark blind.

There be who perpetually complain of schisms and sects, and make it such a calamity that any man dissents from their

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[40] shape.
[41] an old astronomical term, applied to planets when near the sun.
[42] Zwingli, the Zurich reformer.

maxims. 'Tis their own pride and ignorance which causes the disturbing, who neither will hear with meekness, nor can convince; yet all must be suppressed which is not found in their syntagma.[43] They are the troublers, they are the dividers of unity, who neglect and permit not others to unite those dissevered pieces which are yet wanting to the body of Truth. To be still searching what we know not by what we know, still closing up truth to truth as we find it (for all her body is homogeneal and proportional), this is the golden rule in theology as well as in arithmetic, and makes up the best harmony in a Church; not the forced and outward union of cold and neutral, and inwardly divided minds.

Lords and Commons of England, consider what Nation it is whereof ye are, and whereof ye are the governors: a Nation not slow and dull, but of a quick, ingenious and piercing spirit, acute to invent, subtle and sinewy to discourse, not beneath the reach of any point, the highest that human capacity can soar to. Therefore the studies of Learning in her deepest sciences have been so ancient and so eminent among us, that writers of good antiquity and ablest judgment have been persuaded that even the school of Pythagoras and the Persian wisdom took beginning from the old philosophy of this island. And that wise and civil Roman, Julius Agricola, who governed once here for Cæsar, preferred the natural wits of Britain before the laboured studies of the French. Nor is it for nothing that the grave and frugal Transylvanian[44] sends out yearly from as far as the mountainous borders of Russia, and beyond the Hercynian wilderness,[45] not their youth, but their staid men, to learn our language and our theologic arts.

Yet that which is above all this, the favour and the love of Heaven, we have great argument to think in a peculiar manner

[43] handbook, summary (of personal beliefs).
[44] Transylvania, afterwards a part of Hungary, was at this time an independent and a Protestant country.
[45] the Roman term for a mountainous region in southern Germany.

propitious and propending towards us. Why else was this Nation chosen before any other, that out of her, as out of Sion, should be proclaimed and sounded forth the first tidings and trumpet of Reformation to all Europe? And had it not been the obstinate perverseness of our prelates against the divine and admirable spirit of Wickliff, to suppress him as a schismatic and innovator, perhaps neither the Bohemian Huss and Jerome, no nor the name of Luther or of Calvin, had been ever known; the glory of reforming all our neighbours had been completely ours. But now, as our obdurate clergy have with violence demeaned the matter, we are become hitherto the latest and backwardest scholars, of whom God offered to have made us the teachers. Now once again by all concurrence of signs, and by the general instinct of holy and devout men, as they daily and solemnly express their thoughts, God is decreeing to begin some new and great period in His Church, even to the reforming of Reformation itself. What does He then but reveal Himself to His servants, and as His manner is, first to His Englishmen? I say, as His manner is, first to us, though we mark not the method of His counsels, and are unworthy.

Behold now this vast City: a city of refuge, the mansion house of liberty, encompassed and surrounded with His protection; the shop of war hath not there more anvils and hammers waking, to fashion out the plates and instruments of armed Justice in defence of beleaguered Truth, than there be pens and heads there, sitting by their studious lamps, musing, searching, revolving new notions and ideas wherewith to present, as with their homage and their fealty, the approaching Reformation; others as fast reading, trying all things, assenting to the force of reason and convincement. What could a man require more from a Nation so pliant and so prone to seek after knowledge? What wants there to such a towardly [46] and pregnant soil, but

[46] easily tilled.

wise and faithful labourers, to make a knowing people, a Nation of Prophets, of Sages, and of Worthies? We reckon more than five months yet to harvest; there need not be five weeks; had we but eyes to lift up, the fields are white already.

Where there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making. Under these fantastic terrors of sect and schism, we wrong the earnest and zealous thirst after knowledge and understanding which God hath stirred up in this city. What some lament of, we rather should rejoice at, should rather praise this pious forwardness among men, to reassume the ill-reputed care of their religion into their own hands again. A little generous prudence, a little forbearance of one another, and some grain of charity might win all these diligences to join, and unite in one general and brotherly search after Truth; could we but forego this prelatical tradition of crowding free consciences and Christian liberties into canons and precepts of men. I doubt not, if some great and worthy stranger should come among us, wise to discern the mould and temper of a people, and how to govern it, observing the high hopes and aims, the diligent alacrity of our extended thoughts and reasonings in the pursuance of truth and freedom, but that he would cry out as Pyrrhus did, admiring the Roman docility and courage: "If such were my Epirots, I would not despair the greatest design that could be attempted, to make a Church or Kingdom happy."

Yet these are the men cried out against for schismatics and sectaries; as if, while the temple of the Lord was building, some cutting, some squaring the marble, others hewing the cedars, there should be a sort of irrational men who could not consider there must be many schisms and many dissections made in the quarry and in the timber, ere the house of God can be built. And when every stone is laid artfully together, it cannot be united into a continuity, it can but be contiguous in this world;

neither can every piece of the building be of one form; nay rather the perfection consists in this, that, out of many moderate varieties and brotherly dissimilitudes that are not vastly disproportional, arises the goodly and the graceful symmetry that commends the whole pile and structure.

Let us therefore be more considerate builders, more wise in spiritual architecture, when great reformation is expected. For now the time seems come, wherein Moses the great prophet may sit in heaven rejoicing to see that memorable and glorious wish of his fulfilled, when not only our seventy Elders, but all the Lord's people, are become prophets. No marvel then though some men, and some good men too perhaps, but young in goodness, as Joshua then was, envy them. They fret, and out of their own weakness are in agony, lest these divisions and subdivisions will undo us. The adversary again applauds, and waits the hour; when they have branched themselves out, saith he, small enough into parties and partitions, then will be our time. Fool! He sees not the firm root, out of which we all grow, though into branches; nor will be ware until he see our small divided maniples [47] cutting through at every angle of his ill-united and unwieldy brigade. And that we are to hope better of all these supposed sects and schisms, and that we shall not need that solicitude, honest perhaps though over-timorous, of them that vex in this behalf, but shall laugh in the end at those malicious applauders of our differences, I have these reasons to persuade me.

First, when a city [48] shall be as it were besieged and blocked about, her navigable river infested, inroads and incursions round, defiance and battle oft rumoured to be marching up even to her walls and suburb trenches; that then the people, or the greater part, more than at other times, wholly taken up with the study

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[47] handfuls, small companies.
[48] London was so threatened by the Royalist forces, in 1642.

of highest and most important matters to be reformed, should be disputing, reasoning, reading, inventing, discoursing, even to a rarity and admiration, things not before discoursed or written of, argues first a singular goodwill, contentedness and confidence in your prudent foresight and safe government, Lords and Commons; and from thence derives itself to a gallant bravery and well-grounded contempt of their enemies, as if there were no small number of as great spirits among us, as his was, who, when Rome was nigh besieged by Hannibal, being in the city, bought that piece of ground at no cheap rate, whereon Hannibal himself encamped his own regiment.

Next, it is a lively and cheerful presage of our happy success and victory. For as in a body, when the blood is fresh, the spirits pure and vigorous, not only to vital but to rational faculties, and those in the acutest and the pertest [49] operations of wit and subtlety, it argues in what good plight and constitution the body is; so when the cheerfulness of the people is so sprightly up, as that it has not only wherewith to guard well its own freedom and safety, but to spare, and to bestow upon the solidest and sublimest points of controversy and new invention, it betokens us not degenerated, nor drooping to a fatal decay, but casting off the old and wrinkled skin of corruption to outlive these pangs and wax young again, entering the glorious ways of truth and prosperous virtue, destined to become great and honourable in these latter ages.

Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks. Methinks I see her as an eagle mewing [50] her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam; purging and unscaling her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance; while the whole noise of timorous

[49] most agile, liveliest.
[50] renewing (i.e., by changing her feathers, moulting).

and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms.

What would ye do then? Should ye suppress all this flowery crop of knowledge and new light sprung up and yet springing daily in this city? Should ye set an oligarchy of twenty engrossers over it, to bring a famine upon our minds again, when we shall know nothing but what is measured to us by their bushel? Believe it, Lords and Commons, they who counsel ye to such a suppressing do as good as bid ye suppress yourselves; and I will soon show how. If it be desired to know the immediate cause of all this free writing and free speaking, there cannot be assigned a truer than your own mild and free and humane government. It is the liberty, Lords and Commons, which your own valorous and happy counsels have purchased us, liberty which is the nurse of all great wits; this is that which hath rarefied and enlightened our spirits like the influence of heaven; this is that which hath enfranchised, enlarged, and lifted up our apprehensions degrees above themselves.

Ye cannot make us now less capable, less knowing, less eagerly pursuing of the truth, unless ye first make yourselves, that made us so, less the lovers, less the founders of our true liberty. We can grow ignorant again, brutish, formal and slavish, as ye found us; but you then must first become that which ye cannot be, oppressive, arbitrary and tyrannous, as they were from whom ye have freed us. That our hearts are now more capacious, our thoughts more erected to the search and expectation of greatest and exactest things, is the issue of your own virtue propagated in us; ye cannot suppress that, unless ye reinforce an abrogated and merciless law, that fathers may despatch at will their own children. And who shall then stick closest to ye, and excite others? not he who takes up arms for coat and conduct,[51] and

[51] i.e., he who resists illegal taxation for arming and equipping soldiers.

his four nobles of Danegelt.[52] Although I dispraise not the defence of just immunities, yet love my peace better, if that were all. Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties.

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And now the time in special is, by privilege to write and speak what may help to the further discussing of matters in agitation. The temple of Janus with his two controversial[53] faces might now not unsignificantly be set open.[54] And though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously, by licensing and prohibiting, to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter? Her confuting is the best and surest suppressing. He who hears what praying there is for light and clearer knowledge to be sent down among us, would think of other matters to be constituted beyond the discipline of Geneva,[55] framed and fabricked already to our hands.

Yet when the new light which we beg for shines in upon us, there be who envy and oppose, if it come not first in at their casements. What a collusion is this, whenas we are exhorted by the wise man[56] to use diligence, to seek for wisdom as for hidden treasures early and late, that another order shall enjoin us to know nothing but by statute! When a man hath been labouring the hardest labour in the deep mines of knowledge; hath furnished out his findings in all their equipage; drawn forth his reasons as it were a battle ranged; scattered and defeated all objections in his way; calls out his adversary into the plain, offers him the advantage of wind and sun, if he

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[52] A noble was 6s 8d. The reference is probably to Hampden's refusal to pay ship-money.
[53] turned in opposite directions.
[54] The temple of Janus was open only in time of war.
[55] the Presbyterian system.
[56] Solomon.

please, only that he may try the matter by dint of argument—for his opponents then to skulk, to lay ambushments, to keep a narrow bridge of licensing where the challenger should pass, though it be valour enough in soldiership, is but weakness and cowardice in the wars of Truth.

For who knows not that Truth is strong, next to the Almighty? She needs no policies, nor stratagems, nor licensings to make her victorious; those are the shifts and the defences that error uses against her power. Give her but room, and do not bind her when she sleeps, for then she speaks not true, as the old Proteus [57] did, who spake oracles only when he was caught and bound, but then rather she turns herself into all shapes, except her own, and perhaps tunes her voice according to the time, as Micaiah [58] did before Ahab, until she be adjured into her own likeness. Yet is it not impossible that she may have more shapes than one. What else is all that rank of things indifferent, wherein Truth may be on this side or on the other, without being unlike herself? What but a vain shadow else is the abolition of those ordinances,[59] that hand-writing nailed to the cross? What great purchase is this Christian liberty which Paul so often boasts of? His doctrine is, that he who eats or eats not, regards a day or regards it not, may do either to the Lord. How many other things might be tolerated in peace, and left to conscience, had we but charity, and were it not the chief stronghold of our hypocrisy to be ever judging one another?

I fear yet this iron yoke of outward conformity hath left a slavish print upon our necks; the ghost of a linen decency [60] yet haunts us. We stumble and are impatient at the least dividing of one visible congregation from another, though it be not in fundamentals; and through our forwardness to suppress, and

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[57] a Greek sea-god, who could assume many shapes.
[58] cf. 1 *Kings* XXII, 1–28.
[59] cf. *Col.* II, 14.
[60] i.e., the Anglican dispensation with its emphasis upon vestments, and its ideals of uniformity in religion.

our backwardness to recover any enthralled piece of truth out of the gripe of custom, we care not to keep truth separated from truth, which is the fiercest rent and disunion of all. We do not see that, while we still affect by all means a rigid external formality, we may as soon fall again into a gross conforming stupidity, a stark and dead congealment of wood and hay and stubble, forced and frozen together, which is more to the sudden degenerating of a Church than many subdichotomies[61] of petty schisms.

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[61] minor divisions.

Browne

Browne

(1605-1682)

The life of Sir Thomas Browne runs almost parallel with that of Milton, and the most famous prose works of the two writers, *Religio Medici* and *Areopagitica,* appear almost simultaneously. There is therefore a temptation to compare both the men and the works. In spite of the obvious contrasts, it is easy to see more points of contact than the common possession of extraordinary genius for prose-writing. They are alike, surely, in a certain encyclopedic quality of mind, and in a love of words for their own sake—with, of course, the ability to make splendid literary use of this taste. But when one goes further, the resemblances disappear. Perhaps the leading theme of *Religio Medici* is tolerance, but tolerance is not, as in *Areopagitica,* a duty to be preached, or an attitude to be cultivated in oneself; it is very clearly a natural instinct. It is significant too that *Areopagitica* distinctly belongs to the troubled age from which it sprang, while *Religio Medici,* actually written at the very outbreak of the Civil War, carries no slightest suggestion, in subject or manner, of that background.

Sir Thomas Browne was by profession a physician, educated at Oxford and at universities in France, Italy, and Holland. After his youthful travels abroad, he returned home to settle down to the life of a country physician in Norwich. In the intervals of a busy practice he found occasional opportunity to write. Two of his works, *Religio Medici* and *Urn-Burial,* are sufficient warrant of his immortality. Of their quality all competent critics are agreed, and at least one distinguished critic of our own day, Mr. Saintsbury, does not hesitate to call their author "the greatest prose-writer perhaps, when all things are taken together, in the whole range of English." An anonymous enthusiast has recently gone even further: "If you want to see the human intellect working at its best, and unrivalled command over language,——we use the word *unrivalled* in all sobriety—reread our own Favorite of All Books—the *Religio Medici.*"

What is the basis of this rare praise? An unequalled combination, it would seem, of matter and manner. Yet if the two are to be separated, it is surely the manner, the style, that is to be admired even

more than the thought. Not that the substance is unworthy. On the contrary, the ideas of Sir Thomas Browne would be worth investigating even if their expression were as unattractive as it actually is splendid. But it is in the rich embroidery of his thought, in the marvelous cadence and balance of his phrases, that his influence has primarily been felt. To name those who have felt that influence is to call the roll of some of the foremost of English essayists: Lamb, De Quincey, Coleridge, Pater, Stevenson are representative names.

Browne is a true spiritual disciple of Montaigne. In *Religio Medici* we have self-revelation in its finest form; it would be the extreme of ingratitude to quarrel with its author for not having poured it into the usual mould of the short familiar essay. Here is a skepticism in matters philosophical and scientific, unexpectedly combined with reverence and mysticism. He has enthusiasm and a delightful curiosity about worldly affairs, but he has also an abiding sense of the inevitable end. Life is to him a perpetual "miracle," but he likewise accounts this world "not an inn but a hospital; and a place not to live in but to die in." It is idle, however, to attempt to describe the subject matter of the work. Let the reader investigate for himself what Lamb called its "beautiful obliquities."

Religio Medici

The First Part

FOR my religion, though there be several circumstances that might persuade the world I have none at all, as the general scandal of my profession,[1] the natural course of my studies, the indifferency of my behaviour and discourse in matters of religion, neither violently defending one, nor with that common ardour and contention opposing another; yet in despite hereof, I dare, without usurpation, assume the honourable style of a Christian. Not that I merely owe this title to the font, my education, or the clime wherein I was born, as being bred up either to confirm those principles my parents instilled into my unwary understanding, or by a general consent proceed in the

[1] cf. Chaucer's doctor: "His studie was but litel on the Bible."

religion of my country; but having in my riper years and confirmed judgment, seen and examined all, I find myself obliged by the principles of grace, and the law of mine own reason, to embrace no other name but this. Neither doth herein my zeal so far make me forget the general charity I owe unto humanity, as rather to hate than pity Turks, Infidels, and (what is worse) Jews; rather contenting myself to enjoy that happy style, than maligning those who refuse so glorious a title.

But because the name of a Christian is become too general to express our faith, (there being a geography of religion as well as lands, and every clime distinguished not only by their laws and limits, but circumscribed by their doctrines and rules of faith); to be particular, I am of that reformed new-cast religion, wherein I dislike nothing but the name; of the same belief our Saviour taught, the apostles disseminated, the fathers authorized, and the martyrs confirmed; but by the sinister ends of princes, the ambition and avarice of prelates, and the fatal corruption of times, so decayed, impaired, and fallen from its native beauty, that it required the careful and charitable hands of these times to restore it to its primitive integrity. Now the accidental occasion whereupon, the slender means whereby, the low and abject condition of the person [2] by whom so good a work was set on foot, which in our adversaries beget contempt and scorn, fills me with wonder, and is the very same objection the insolent pagans first cast at Christ and His disciples.

Yet have I not so shaken hands with those desperate resolutions,[3] (who had rather venture at large their decayed bottom, than bring her in to be new trimmed in the dock; who had rather promiscuously retain all, than abridge any, and obstinately be what they are, than what they have been,) as to stand in diameter and swords' point with them. We have reformed from them,

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[2] Luther.
[3] persons of desperate resolutions.

not against them; for, omitting those improperations [4] and terms of scurrility betwixt us, which only difference our affections, and not our cause, there is between us one common name and appellation, one faith and necessary body of principles common to us both. And therefore I am not scrupulous to converse and live with them, to enter their churches in defect of ours, and either pray with them, or for them. I could never perceive any rational consequence from those many texts which prohibit the Children of Israel to pollute themselves with the temples of the heathens; we being all Christians, and not divided by such detested impieties as might profane our prayers, or the place wherein we make them; or that a resolved conscience may not adore her Creator anywhere, especially in places devoted to His service; where, if their devotions offend Him, mine may please Him; if theirs profane it, mine may hallow it. Holy-water and crucifix (dangerous to the common people) deceive not my judgment, nor abuse my devotion at all. I am, I confess, naturally inclined to that which misguided zeal terms superstition: my common conversation I do acknowledge austere, my behaviour full of rigour, sometimes not without morosity; yet at my devotion I love to use the civility of my knee, my hat, and hand, with all those outward and sensible motions which may express or promote my invisible devotion. I should violate my own arm rather than a church; nor willingly deface the name of saint or martyr. At the sight of a cross or crucifix I can dispense with my hat, but scarce with the thought or memory of my Saviour. I cannot laugh at, but rather pity, the fruitless journeys of pilgrims, or contemn the miserable condition of friars; for, though misplaced in circumstances, there is something in it of devotion. I could never hear the Ave-Mary bell without an elevation, or think it a sufficient warrant, because they erred in one circumstance, for me to err in all, that

[4] taunts.

is, in silence and dumb contempt. Whilst therefore they directed their devotions to her, I offered mine to God, and rectified the errors of their prayers, by rightly ordering mine own. At a solemn procession I have wept abundantly, while my consorts, blind with opposition and prejudice, have fallen into an excess of scorn and laughter. There are, questionless, both in Greek, Roman, and African churches, solemnities and ceremonies, whereof the wiser zeals do make a Christian use, and stand condemned by us, not as evil in themselves, but as allurements and baits of superstition to those vulgar heads that look asquint on the face of truth, and those unstable judgments that cannot consist in the narrow point and center of virtue without a reel or stagger to the circumference.

As there were many reformers, so likewise many reformations; every country proceeding in a particular way and method, according as their national interest, together with their constitution and clime inclined them; some angrily, and with extremity; others calmly, and with mediocrity; not rending, but easily dividing the community, and leaving an honest possibility of a reconciliation; which, though peaceable spirits do desire, and may conceive that revolution of time and the mercies of God may effect, yet that judgment that shall consider the present antipathies between the two extremes, their contrarieties in condition, affection, and opinion, may with the same hopes expect an union in the poles of heaven.

But (to difference[5] myself nearer, and draw into a lesser circle), there is no church, whose every part so squares unto my conscience; whose articles, constitutions, and customs, seem so consonant unto reason, and as it were framed to my particular devotion, as this whereof I hold my belief, the Church of England; to whose faith I am a sworn subject, and therefore in a double obligation subscribe unto her articles, and endeavour

[5] define.

to observe her constitutions. Whatsoever is beyond, as points indifferent, I observe according to the rules of my private reason, or the humour and fashion of my devotion; neither believing this, because Luther affirmed it, or disproving that, because Calvin hath disavouched it. I condemn not all things in the Council of Trent, nor approve all in the Synod of Dort. In brief, where the Scripture is silent, the church is my text; where that speaks, 'tis but my comment; where there is a joint silence of both, I borrow not the rules of my religion from Rome or Geneva, but the dictates of my own reason. It is an unjust scandal of our adversaries, and a gross error in ourselves, to compute the nativity of our religion from Henry the Eighth, who, though he rejected the Pope, refused not the faith of Rome, and effected no more than what his own predecessors desired and assayed in ages past, and was conceived the State of Venice would have attempted in our days. It is as uncharitable a point in us to fall upon those popular scurrilities and opprobrious scoffs of the Bishop of Rome, to whom, as a temporal prince, we owe the duty of good language. I confess there is cause of passion between us: by his sentence I stand excommunicated; *heretic* is the best language he affords me; yet can no ear witness, I ever returned him the name of Antichrist, Man of Sin, or Whore of Babylon. It is the method of charity to suffer without reaction; those usual satires and invectives of the pulpit may perchance produce a good effect on the vulgar, whose ears are opener to rhetoric than logic; yet do they in no wise confirm the faith of wiser believers, who know that a good cause needs not to be patroned by passion, but can sustain itself upon a temperate dispute.

I could never divide myself from any man upon the difference of an opinion, or be angry with his judgment for not agreeing with me in that from which within a few days I should dissent myself. I have no genius to disputes in religion, and have often thought it wisdom to decline them, especially upon

a disadvantage, or when the cause of truth might suffer in the weakness of my patronage. Where we desire to be informed, 'tis good to contest with men above ourselves; but to confirm and establish our opinions, 'tis best to argue with judgments below our own, that the frequent spoils and victories over their reasons, may settle in ourselves an esteem and confirmed opinion of our own. Every man is not a proper champion for truth, nor fit to take up the gauntlet in the cause of verity. Many, from the ignorance of these maxims, and an inconsiderate zeal unto truth, have too rashly charged the troops of error, and remain as trophies unto the enemies of truth. A man may be in as just possession of truth as of a city, and yet be forced to surrender; 'tis therefore far better to enjoy her with peace, than to hazard her on a battle. If, therefore, there rise any doubts in my way, I do forget them, or at least defer them, till my better settled judgment and more manly reason be able to resolve them; for I perceive every man's own reason is his best Œdipus,[6] and will upon a reasonable truce find a way to loose those bonds wherewith the subtleties of error have enchained our more flexible and tender judgments. In philosophy, where truth seems double-faced, there is no man more paradoxical than myself; but in divinity I love to keep the road; and though not in an implicit, yet an humble faith, follow the great wheel of the church, by which I move, not reserving any proper poles or motion from the epicycle[7] of my own brain. By this means I leave no gap for heresies, schisms, or errors, of which at present I hope I shall not injure truth to say I have no taint or tincture. I must confess my greener studies have been polluted with two or three, not any begotten in the latter centuries, but old and obsolete, such as could never have been revived but by such extravagant and irregular heads as mine. For, indeed, heresies

[6] guide in perplexities (Œdipus solved the riddle of the Sphinx).
[7] in astronomy, a small circle whose center describes a larger one.

perish not with their authors, but like the river Arethusa, though they lose their currents in one place, they rise up again in another. One general council is not able to extirpate one single heresy; it may be cancelled for the present, but revolution of time, and the like aspects from heaven, will restore it, when it will flourish till it be condemned again. For as though there were metempsychosis, and the soul of one man passed into another, opinions do find after certain revolutions men and minds like those that first begat them. To see ourselves again, we need not look for Plato's year: [8] every man is not only himself; there hath been many Diogenes, and as many Timons, though but few of that name; men are lived over again, the world is now as it was in ages past; there was none then, but there hath been some one since that parallels him, and is, as it were, his revived self.

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As for those wingy mysteries in divinity, and airy subtleties in religion, which have unhinged the brains of better heads, they never stretched the *pia mater* [9] of mine. Methinks there be not impossibilities enough in religion for an active faith; the deepest mysteries ours contains have not only been illustrated, but maintained by syllogism and the rule of reason. I love to lose myself in a mystery, to pursue my reason to an *O altitudo!* [10] 'Tis my solitary recreation to pose my apprehension with those involved enigmas and riddles of the Trinity, with incarnation and resurrection. I can answer all the objections of Satan and my rebellious reason with that odd resolution I learned of Tertullian, *Certum est quia impossibile est.*[11] I desire to exercise my faith in the difficultest point; for to credit ordinary

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[8] a period of thousands of years, which would see at its close all things returned to the same state as at its opening.
[9] the innermost membrane of the brain.
[10] O height! The thought is: "Follow my reason to the point beyond which it cannot go."
[11] It is certain, because it is impossible.

and visible objects, is not faith, but persuasion. Some believe the better for seeing Christ's sepulchre; and, when they have seen the Red Sea, doubt not of the miracle. Now, contrarily, I bless myself, and am thankful that I lived not in the days of miracles, that I never saw Christ nor His disciples. I would not have been one of those Israelites that passed the Red Sea, nor one of Christ's patients on whom He wrought His wonders; then had my faith been thrust upon me, nor should I enjoy that greater blessing pronounced to all that believe and saw not. 'Tis an easy and necessary belief, to credit what our eye and sense hath examined. I believe He was dead and buried, and rose again; and desire to see Him in His glory, rather than to contemplate Him in His cenotaph or sepulchre. Nor is this much to believe; as we have reason, we owe this faith unto history: they only had the advantage of a bold and noble faith, who lived before His coming, who upon obscure prophecies and mystical types could raise a belief, and expect apparent impossibilities.

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Natura nihil agit frustra,[12] is the only indisputed axiom in philosophy. There are no grotesques in nature; not anything framed to fill up empty cantons and unnecessary spaces. In the most imperfect creatures, and such as were not preserved in the ark, but, having their seeds and principles in the womb of Nature, are everywhere where the power of the sun is,—in these is the wisdom of His hand discovered. Out of this rank Solomon chose the object of his admiration. Indeed, what reason may not go to school to the wisdom of bees, ants, and spiders? What wise hand teacheth *them* to do what reason cannot teach *us?* Ruder heads stand amazed at those prodigious pieces of nature, whales, elephants, dromedaries and camels; these, I confess, are the colossus and majestic pieces of her hand; but in these

[12] Nature does nothing in vain.

narrow engines there is more curious mathematics; and the civility of these little citizens more neatly sets forth the wisdom of their maker. Who admires not Regio-Montanus[13] his fly beyond his eagle, or wonders not more at the operation of two souls in those little bodies, than but one in the trunk of a cedar? I could never content my contemplation with those general pieces of wonder, the flux and reflux of the sea, the increase of Nile, the conversion of the needle to the north; and have studied to match and parallel those in the more obvious and neglected pieces of nature, which without further travel I can do in the cosmography of myself. We carry with us the wonders we seek without us. There is all Africa and her prodigies in us; we are that bold and adventurous piece of nature, which he that studies wisely learns in a compendium what others labour at in a divided piece and endless volume.

Thus there are two books from whence I collect my divinity: besides that written one of God, another of His servant, Nature, that universal and public manuscript, that lies expansed unto the eyes of all. Those that never saw Him in the one, have discovered Him in the other. This was the scripture and theology of the heathens: the natural motion of the sun made *them* more admire Him than its supernatural station did the Children of Israel; the ordinary effects of nature wrought more admiration in *them* than in the other all His miracles. Surely the heathens knew better how to join and read these mystical letters than we Christians, who cast a more careless eye on these common hieroglyphics, and disdain to suck divinity from the flowers of nature. Nor do I so forget God as to adore the name of nature; which I define not, with the schools, to be the principle of motion and rest, but that straight and regular line, that settled and constant course the wisdom of God hath ordained the actions of His creatures, according to their several kinds. To make

[13] who constructed mechanical replicas of both the fly and the eagle.

a revolution every day is the nature of the sun, because of that necessary course which God hath ordained it, from which it cannot swerve but by a faculty from that voice which first did give it motion. Now this course of nature God seldom alters or perverts, but, like an excellent artist, hath so contrived His work, that with the self same instrument, without a new creation, He may effect His obscurest designs. Thus He sweeteneth the water with a wood, preserveth the creatures in the ark, which the blast of His mouth might have as easily created; for God is like a skilful geometrician, who, when more easily and with one stroke of his compass he might describe or divide a right line, had yet rather do this in a circle or longer way, according to the constituted and fore-laid principles of his art. Yet this rule of His He doth sometimes pervert, to acquaint the world with His prerogative, lest the arrogancy of our reason should question His power, and conclude He could not. And thus I call the effects of nature the works of God, whose hand and instrument she only is; and therefore to ascribe His actions unto her, is to devolve the honour of the principal agent upon the instrument; which if with reason we may do, then let our hammers rise up and boast they have built our houses, and our pens receive the honour of our writings. I hold there is a general beauty in the works of God, and therefore no deformity in any kind or species of creature whatsoever. I cannot tell by what logic we call a toad, a bear, or an elephant ugly; they being created in those outward shapes and figures which best express the actions of their inward forms, and having passed the general visitation of God, who saw that all that He had made was good, that is, conformable to His will, which abhors deformity, and is the rule of order and beauty. There is no deformity but in monstrosity; wherein, notwithstanding, there is a kind of beauty; nature so ingeniously contriving the irregular parts, as they become sometimes more remarkable than the principal fabric. To speak yet more narrowly, there was never anything

ugly or mis-shapen, but the chaos; wherein, notwithstanding (to speak strictly), there was no deformity, because no form; nor was it yet impregnant by the voice of God. Now nature is not at variance with art, nor art with nature, they being both servants of His providence. Art is the perfection of nature. Were the world now as it was the sixth day, there were yet a chaos. Nature hath made one world, and art another. In brief, all things are artificial; for nature is the art of God.

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It is a riddle to me, how this story of oracles hath not wormed out of the world that doubtful conceit of spirits and witches; how so many learned heads should so far forget their metaphysics, and destroy the ladder and scale of creatures, as to question the existence of spirits. For my part, I have ever believed, and do now know, that there are witches; they that doubt of these, do not only deny them, but spirits; and are obliquely and upon consequence a sort not of infidels, but atheists. Those that to confute their incredulity desire to see apparitions, shall questionless never behold any, nor have the power to be so much as witches; the Devil hath them already in a heresy as capital as witchcraft; and to appear to them, were but to convert them.

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Now, besides these particular and divided spirits, there may be (for aught I know), an universal and common Spirit to the whole world. It was the opinion of Plato, and it is yet of the Hermetical [14] philosophers. If there be a common nature that unites and ties the scattered and divided individuals into one species, why may there not be one that unites them all? However, I am sure there is a common Spirit that plays within us, yet makes no part of us; and that is, the Spirit of God, the fire

[14] of the school of Hermes Trismegistus.

and scintillation of that noble and mighty essence, which is the life and radical heat of spirits, and those essences that know not the virtue of the sun; a fire quite contrary to the fire of Hell. This is that gentle heat that brooded on the waters, and in six days hatched the world; this is that irradiation that dispels the mists of Hell, the clouds of horrour, fear, sorrow, despair; and preserves the region of the mind in serenity. Whosoever feels not the warm gale and gentle ventilation of this Spirit, though I feel his pulse, I dare not say he lives; for truly, without this, to me there is no heat under the tropic; nor any light, though I dwelt in the body of the sun.

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Therefore for spirits, I am so far from denying their existence, that I could easily believe, that not only whole countries, but particular persons, have their tutelary and guardian angels. It is not a new opinion of the Church of Rome, but an old one of Pythagoras and Plato; there is no heresy in it; and if not manifestly defined in Scripture, yet is it an opinion of a good and wholesome use in the course and actions of a man's life, and would serve as an hypothesis to salve many doubts, whereof common philosophy affordeth no solution. Now, if you demand my opinion and metaphysics of their natures, I confess them very shallow; most of them in a negative way, like that of God; or in a comparative, between ourselves and fellow-creatures; for there is in this universe a stair, or manifest scale of creatures, rising not disorderly, or in confusion, but with a comely method and proportion. Between creatures of mere existence, and things of life, there is a large disproportion of nature; between plants, and animals or creatures of sense, a wider difference; between them and man, a far greater; and if the proportion hold on, between man and angels there should be yet a greater.

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Now, for these walls of flesh, wherein the soul doth seem to

be immured before the resurrection, it is nothing but an elemental composition, and a fabric that must fall to ashes. *All flesh is grass,* is not only metaphorically, but literally, true; for all those creatures we behold are but the herbs of the field, digested into flesh in them, or more remotely carnified [15] in ourselves. Nay further, we are what we all abhor, anthropophagi and cannibals, devourers not only of men, but of ourselves; and that not in an allegory, but a positive truth; for all this mass of flesh which we behold, came in at our mouths; this frame we look upon, hath been upon our trenchers; in brief, we have devoured ourselves. I cannot believe the wisdom of Pythagoras did ever positively, and in a literal sense, affirm his metempsychosis, or impossible transmigration of the souls of men into beasts. Of all metamorphoses or transmigrations, I believe only one, that is of Lot's wife; for that of Nebuchodonosor proceeded not so far. In all others I conceive there is no further verity than is contained in their implicit sense and morality. I believe that the whole frame of a beast doth perish, and is left in the same state after death as before it was materialled unto life; that the souls of men know neither contrary nor corruption; that they subsist beyond the body, and outlive death by the privilege of their proper natures, and without a miracle; that the souls of the faithful, as they leave earth, take possession of heaven; that those apparitions and ghosts of departed persons are not the wandering souls of men, but the unquiet walks of devils, prompting and suggesting us unto mischief, blood, and villainy; instilling and stealing into our hearts that the blessed spirits are not at rest in their graves, but wander solicitous of the affairs of the world. But that those phantasms appear often, and do frequent cemeteries, charnel-houses, and churches, it is because those are the dormitories of the dead, where the Devil,

[15] made flesh.

like an insolent champion, beholds with pride the spoils and trophies of his victory over Adam.

This is that dismal conquest we all deplore, that makes us so often cry, *O Adam, quid fecisti?* [16] I thank God I have not those strait ligaments, or narrow obligations to the world, as to dote on life, or be convulsed and tremble at the name of death. Not that I am insensible of the dread and horrour thereof; or by raking into the bowels of the deceased, continual sight of anatomies, skeletons, or cadaverous reliques, like vespilloes,[17] or grave-makers, I am become stupid, or have forgot the apprehension of mortality; but that, marshalling all the horrours, and contemplating the extremities thereof, I find not anything therein able to daunt the courage of a man, much less a well-resolved Christian; and therefore am not angry at the error of our first parents, or unwilling to bear a part of this common fate, and like the best of them to die, that is, to cease to breathe, to take a farewell of the elements, to be a kind of nothing for a moment, to be within one instant of a spirit. When I take a full view and circle of myself without this reasonable moderator, and equal piece of justice, death, I do conceive myself the miserablest person extant. Were there not another life that I hope for, all the vanities of this world should not entreat a moment's breath from me; could the Devil work my belief to imagine I could never die, I would not outlive that very thought. I have so abject a conceit [18] of this common way of existence, this retaining to the sun and elements, I cannot think this is to be a man, or to live according to the dignity of humanity. In expectation of a better, I can with patience embrace this life, yet in my best meditations do often defy death; I honour any man that contemns it, nor can I highly love any that is

[16] O Adam, what hast thou done?
[17] corpse-bearers.
[18] conception.

afraid of it: this makes me naturally love a soldier, and honour those tattered and contemptible regiments that will die at the command of a sergeant. For a pagan there may be some motives to be in love with life; but for a Christian to be amazed at death, I see not how he can escape this dilemma, that he is too sensible of this life, or hopeless of the life to come.

Some divines count Adam thirty years old at his creation, because they suppose him created in the perfect age and stature of man. And surely we are all out of the computation of our age, and every man is some months elder than he bethinks him; for we live, move, have a being, and are subject to the actions of the elements, and the malice of diseases, in that other world, the truest microcosm, the womb of our mother. For besides that general and common existence we are conceived to hold in our chaos, and whilst we sleep within the bosom of our causes, we enjoy a being and life in three distinct worlds, wherein we receive most manifest graduations. In that obscure world and womb of our mother, our time is short, computed by the moon, yet longer than the days of many creatures that behold the sun; ourselves being not yet without life, sense, and reason; though for the manifestation of its actions, it awaits the opportunity of objects, and seems to live there but in its root and soul of vegetation. Entering afterwards upon the scene of the world, we arise up and become another creature, performing the reasonable actions of man, and obscurely manifesting that part of divinity in us; but not in complement [19] and perfection, till we have once more cast our secondine,[20] that is, this slough of flesh, and are delivered into the last world, that is, that ineffable place of Paul, the proper *ubi* [21] of Spirits. The smattering I have of the philosopher's stone (which is something more than

[19] completeness.
[20] after-birth.
[21] home.

the perfect exaltation [22] of gold) hath taught me a great deal of divinity, and instructed my belief, how that immortal spirit and incorruptible substance of my soul may lie obscure, and sleep a while within this house of flesh. Those strange and mystical transmigrations that I have observed in silkworms, turned my philosophy into divinity. There is in these works of nature, which seem to puzzle reason, something divine, and hath more in it than the eye of a common spectator doth discover.

I am naturally bashful; nor hath conversation, age, or travel, been able to effront,[23] or enharden me; yet I have one part of modesty which I have seldom discovered in another, that is (to speak truly), I am not so much afraid of death, as ashamed thereof. 'Tis the very disgrace and ignominy of our natures, that in a moment can so disfigure us, that our nearest friends, wife, and children, stand afraid and start at us: the birds and beasts of the field, that before in a natural fear obeyed us, forgetting all allegiance, begin to prey upon us. This very conceit hath, in a tempest, disposed and left me willing to be swallowed up in the abyss of waters, wherein I had perished unseen, unpitied, without wondering eyes, tears of pity, lectures of mortality, and none had said, *Quantam mutatus ab illo!* [24] Not that I am ashamed of the anatomy of my parts, or can accuse nature for playing the bungler in any part of me, or my own vicious life for contracting any shameful disease upon me, whereby I might not call myself as wholesome a morsel for the worms as any.

Some, upon the courage of a fruitful issue, wherein, as in the truest chronicle, they seem to outlive themselves, can with greater patience away with death. This conceit and counterfeit subsisting in our progenies seems to me a mere fallacy, unworthy the desires of a man that can but conceive a thought of

[22] refining.
[23] embolden.
[24] How changed from what he was!

the next world; who, in a nobler ambition, should desire to live in his substance in heaven, rather than his name and shadow in the earth. And therefore at my death I mean to take a total adieu of the world, not caring for a monument, history, or epitaph, not so much as the bare memory of my name to be found anywhere but in the universal register of God. I am not yet so cynical as to approve the testament of Diogenes;[25] nor do I altogether allow that *rodomontado*[26] of Lucan,

——*Cœlo tegitur, qui non habet urnam.*

He that unburied lies wants not his hearse,
For unto him a tomb's the universe.

but commend, in my calmer judgment, those ingenuous intentions that desire to sleep by the urns of their fathers, and strive to go the neatest way unto corruption. I do not envy the temper[27] of crows and daws,[28] nor the numerous and weary days of our fathers before the flood. If there be any truth in astrology, I may outlive a jubilee:[29] as yet I have not seen one revolution of Saturn,[30] nor hath my pulse beat thirty years; and yet, excepting one, have seen the ashes of, and left under ground, all the kings of Europe; have been contemporary to three emperors, four Grand Signiors, and as many popes. Methinks I have outlived myself, and begin to be weary of the sun; I have shaken hands with delight; in my warm blood and canicular[31] days, I perceive I do anticipate the vices of age; the world to me is but a dream or mock-show, and we all therein but pantalones and antics, to my severer contemplations.

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[25] "Who willed his friend not to bury him, but to hang him up with his staff in his hand, to fright away the crows." [Browne's note.]
[26] rant.
[27] constitution, nature.
[28] which were thought to outlive human beings.
[29] period of fifty years.
[30] which occurs once in thirty years.
[31] dog-days; here, time of early manhood.

It is not, I confess, an unlawful prayer to desire to surpass the days of our Saviour, or wish to outlive that age wherein he thought fittest to die; yet if, (as divinity affirms) there shall be no gray hairs in heaven, but all shall rise in the perfect state of men, we do but outlive those perfections in this world, to be recalled unto them by a greater miracle in the next, and run on here but to be retrograde hereafter. Were there any hopes to outlive vice, or a point to be superannuated from sin, it were worthy our knees to implore the days of Methuselah. But age doth not rectify, but incurvate [32] our natures, turning bad dispositions into worser habits, and (like diseases) brings on incurable vices; for every day as we grow weaker in age, we grow stronger in sin, and the number of our days doth but make our sins innumerable. The same vice, committed at sixteen, is not the same, though it agree in all other circumstances, at forty, but swells and doubles from the circumstance of our ages; wherein, besides the constant and inexcusable habit of transgressing, the maturity of our judgment cuts off pretence unto excuse or pardon. Every sin, the oftener it is committed, the more it acquireth in the quality of evil; as it succeeds in time, so it proceeds in degrees of badness; for as they proceed they ever multiply, and, like figures in arithmetic, the last stands for more than all that went before it. And though I think no man can live well once, but he that could live twice, yet for my own part I would not live over my hours past, or begin again the thread of my days: not upon Cicero's ground, because I have lived them well, but for fear I should live them worse. I find my growing judgment daily instruct me how to be better, but my untamed affections and confirmed vitiosity makes me daily do worse. I find in my confirmed age the same sins I discovered in my youth; I committed many then, because I was a child; and because I commit them still, I am yet an infant. There-

[32] make crooked.

fore I perceive a man may be twice a child, before the days of dotage; and stand in need of Æson's bath [33] before threescore.

And truly there goes a great deal of providence to produce a man's life unto threescore: there is more required than an able temper for those years; though the radical humour contain in it sufficient oil for seventy, yet I perceive in some it gives no light past thirty; men assign not all the causes of long life, that write whole books thereof. They that found themselves on the radical balsam, or vital sulphur [34] of the parts, determine not why Abel lived not so long as Adam. There is therefore a secret glome [35] or bottom of our days: 'twas His wisdom to determine them, but His perpetual and waking providence that fulfills and accomplisheth them; wherein the spirits, ourselves, and all the creatures of God in a secret and disputed way do execute His will. Let them not therefore complain of immaturity that die about thirty; they fall but like the whole world, whose solid and well composed substance must not expect the duration and period of its constitution: when all things are completed in it, its age is accomplished; and the last and general fever may as naturally destroy it before six thousand, as me before forty. There is therefore some other hand that twines the thread of life than that of nature: we are not only ignorant in antipathies and occult qualities; our ends are as obscure as our beginnings; the line of our days is drawn by night, and the various effects therein by a pencil that is invisible; wherein, though we confess our ignorance, I am sure we do not err if we say it is the hand of God.

I am much taken with two verses of Lucan, since I have been able not only, as we do at school, to construe, but understand:

> *Victurosque Dei celant, ut vivere durent,*
> *Felix esse mori.*

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[33] According to the legend, Medea thus restored Æson's youth.
[34] These were reputed to be sources of long life.
[35] ball of yarn.

We're all deluded, vainly searching ways
To make us happy by the length of days;
For cunningly, to make's protract this breath,
The Gods conceal the happiness of Death.

There be many excellent strains in that poet, wherewith his stoical genius hath liberally supplied him; and truly there are singular pieces in the philosophy of Zeno, and doctrine of the Stoics, which I perceive, delivered in a pulpit, pass for current divinity; yet herein are they in extremes, that can allow a man to be his own assassin, and so highly extol the end and suicide of Cato. That is indeed not to fear death, but yet to be afraid of life. It is a brave act of valour to contemn death; but where life is more terrible than death, it is then the truest valour to dare to live. And herein religion hath taught us a noble example; for all the valiant acts of Curtius, Scevola, or Codrus, do not parallel or match the one of Job; and sure there is no torture to the rack of disease, nor any poniards in death itself like those in the way or prologue unto it.

Emori nolo, sed me esse mortuum nihil curo.
I would not die, but care not to be dead.

Were I of Cæsar's religion, I should be of his desires, and wish rather to go off at one blow, than to be sawed in pieces by the grating torture of a disease. Men that look no farther than their outsides, think health an appurtenance unto life, and quarrel with their constitutions for being sick; but I, that have examined the parts of man, and know upon what tender filaments that fabric hangs, do wonder that we are not always so; and, considering the thousand doors that lead to death, do thank my God that we can die but once. 'Tis not only the mischief of diseases, and the villainy of poisons, that make an end of us; we vainly accuse the fury of guns, and the new inventions of death; it is in the power of every hand to destroy

us, and we are beholding unto every one we meet, he doth not kill us. There is therefore but one comfort left, that, though it be in the power of the weakest arm to take away life, it is not in the strongest to deprive us of death; God would not exempt Himself from that; the misery of immortality in the flesh, He undertook not that was immortal. Certainly there is no happiness within this circle of flesh; nor is it in the optics of these eyes to behold felicity. The first day of our jubilee is death; the Devil hath therefore failed of his desires; we are happier with death than we should have been without it. There is no misery but in himself, where there is no end of misery; and so indeed, in his own sense, the Stoic is right. He forgets that he can die who complains of misery; we are in the power of no calamity while death is in our own.

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Men commonly set forth the torments of Hell by fire, and the extremity of corporal afflictions, and describe Hell in the same method that Mahomet doth Heaven. This indeed makes a noise, and drums in popular ears; but if this be the terrible piece thereof, it is not worthy to stand in diameter with[36] Heaven, whose happiness consists in that part that is best able to comprehend it, that immortal essence, that translated divinity and colony of God, the soul. Surely, though we place Hell under earth, the Devil's walk and purlieu is about it: men speak too popularly who place it in those flaming mountains, which to grosser apprehensions represent Hell. The heart of man is the place the Devils dwell in: I feel sometimes a Hell within myself; Lucifer keeps his court in my breast; Legion is revived in me. There are as many Hells as Anaxagoris[37] conceited worlds. There was more than one Hell in Magdalene, when there were seven Devils, for every Devil is an Hell unto himself; he holds enough of torture in his own *ubi,* and needs not

[36] be diametrically opposed to.
[37] Anaxarchus, who apparently is meant here, held that there were infinite worlds.

the misery of circumference to afflict him. And thus a distracted conscience here, is a shadow or introduction unto Hell hereafter. Who can but pity the merciful intention of those hands that do destroy themselves? The Devil, were it in his power, would do the like; which being impossible, his miseries are endless, and he suffers most in that attribute wherein he is impassible,[38] his immortality.

I thank God, and with joy I mention it, I was never afraid of Hell, nor never grew pale at the description of that place. I have so fixed my contemplations on Heaven, that I have almost forgot the idea of Hell, and am afraid rather to lose the joys of the one, than endure the misery of the other: to be deprived of them is a perfect Hell, and needs, methinks, no addition to complete our afflictions. That terrible term hath never detained me from sin, nor do I owe any good action to the name thereof. I fear God, yet am not afraid of Him; His mercies make me ashamed of my sins, before His judgments afraid thereof. These are the forced and secondary method of His wisdom, which He useth but as the last remedy, and upon provocation; a course rather to deter the wicked, than incite the virtuous to His worship. I can hardly think there was ever any scared into Heaven; they go the fairest way to Heaven that would serve God without a Hell; other mercenaries, that crouch into Him in fear of Hell, though they term themselves the servants, are indeed but the slaves, of the Almighty.

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The Second Part

NOW for that other virtue of charity, without which faith is a mere notion, and of no existence, I have ever endeavoured to nourish the merciful disposition and humane in-

[38] exempt from dissolution.

clination I borrowed from my parents, and regulate it to the written and prescribed laws of charity. And, if I hold the true anatomy of myself, I am delineated and naturally framed to such a piece of virtue; for I am of a constitution so general that it consorts and sympathiseth with all things. I have no antipathy, or rather idiosyncrasy, in diet, humour, air, anything. I wonder not at the French for their dishes of frogs, snails, and toadstools, nor at the Jews for locusts and grasshoppers; but being amongst them, make them my common viands, and I find they agree with my stomach as well as theirs. I could digest a salad gathered in a church-yard, as well as in a garden. I cannot start at the presence of a serpent, scorpion, lizard, or salamander: at the sight of a toad or viper, I find in me no desire to take up a stone to destroy them. I feel not in myself those common antipathies that I can discover in others: those national repugnances do not touch me, nor do I behold with prejudice the French, Italian, Spaniard, or Dutch; but where I find their actions in balance with my countrymen's, I honour, love, and embrace them in the same degree. I was born in the eighth climate,[39] but seem for to be framed and constellated unto [40] all. I am no plant that will not prosper out of a garden. All places, all airs, make unto me one country; I am in England everywhere, and under any meridian. I have been shipwracked, yet am not enemy with the sea or winds; I can study, play, or sleep in a tempest. In brief, I am averse from nothing: my conscience would give me the lie if I should say I absolutely detest or hate any essence but the Devil; or so at least abhor anything, but that we might come to composition. If there be any among those common objects of hatred I do contemn and laugh at, it is that great enemy of reason, virtue and religion, the multitude: that numerous piece of monstrosity, which, taken asunder, seem men, and the reasonable creatures of God; but,

[39] region of the earth (used as degrees of latitude are now used).
[40] by the constellation of my birth congenial to.

confused together, make but one great beast, and a monstrosity more prodigious than hydra. It is no breach of charity to call these fools; it is the style all holy writers have afforded them, set down by Solomon in canonical Scripture, and a point of our faith to believe so. Neither in the name of multitude do I only include the base and minor sort of people; there is a rabble even amongst the gentry, a sort of plebeian heads, whose fancy moves with the same wheel as these; men in the same level with mechanics, though their fortunes do somewhat gild their infirmities, and their purses compound for their follies. But as, in casting account, three or four men together come short in account of one man placed by himself below them; so neither are a troop of these ignorant doradoes [41] of that true esteem and value, as many a forlorn person, whose condition doth place him below their feet. Let us speak like politicians: [42] there is a nobility without heraldry, a natural dignity, whereby one man is ranked with another, another filed before him, according to the quality of his desert, and preëminence of his good parts. Though the corruption of these times and the bias of present practice wheel another way, thus it was in the first and primitive commonwealths, and is yet in the integrity and cradle of well-ordered polities, till corruption getteth ground; ruder desires labouring after that which wiser considerations contemn; every one having a liberty to amass and heap up riches, and they a license or faculty to do or purchase anything.

This general and indifferent temper of mine doth more nearly dispose me to this noble virtue. It is a happiness to be born and framed unto virtue, and to grow up from the seeds of nature, rather than the inoculation and forced graffs [43] of education: yet if we are directed only by our particular natures, and regulate our inclinations by no higher rule than that of our

[41] the Spanish word for gilthead or goldfish; here, equivalent to "gilded fools."
[42] statesmen.
[43] grafts.

reasons, we are but moralists; divinity will still call us heathens. Therefore this great work of charity must have other motives, ends, and impulsions. I give no alms only to satisfy the hunger of my brother, but to fulfill and accomplish the will and command of my God: I draw not my purse for his sake that demands it, but His that enjoyned it: I relieve no man upon the rhetoric of his miseries, nor to content mine own commiserating disposition; for this is still but moral charity, and an act that oweth more to passion [44] than reason. He that relieves another upon the bare suggestion and bowels of pity, doth not this so much for his sake as for his own; for by compassion we make others' misery our own, and so, by relieving them, we relieve ourselves also. It is as erroneous a conceit to redress other men's misfortunes upon the common considerations of merciful natures, that it may be one day our own case; for this is a sinister and politic kind of charity, whereby we seem to bespeak the pities of men in the like occasions. And truly I have observed that those professed eleemosynaries, though in a crowd or multitude, do yet direct and place their petitions on a few and selected persons; there is surely a physiognomy, which those experienced and master mendicants observe, whereby they instantly discover a merciful aspect, and will single out a face wherein they spy the signatures and marks of mercy. For there are mystically in our faces certain characters [45] which carry in them the motto of our souls, wherein he that cannot read A B C may read our natures. I hold, moreover, that there is a phytognomy,[46] or physiognomy, not only of men, but of plants and vegetables; and in every one of them some outward figures which hang as signs or bushes [47] of their inward forms. The finger of God hath left an inscription upon all His works, not graphical or composed of letters, but of their several forms,

[44] sympathy, *com*passion.
[45] features, characteristics.
[46] discerning the nature of plants from their outward forms.
[47] Ivy-bushes, particularly, were used as signs before tavern doors.

constitutions, parts, and operations, which, aptly joined together, do make one word that doth express their natures. By these letters God calls the stars by their names; and by this alphabet Adam assigned to every creature a name peculiar to its nature. Now there are, besides these characters in our faces, certain mystical figures in our hands, which I dare not call mere dashes, strokes *à la volée*, or at random, because delineated by a pencil that never works in vain; and hereof I take more particular notice, because I carry that in mine own hand which I could never read of nor discover in another. Aristotle, I confess, in his acute and singular book of physiognomy, hath made no mention of chiromancy;[48] yet I believe the Egyptians, who were nearer addicted to those abstruse and mystical sciences, had a knowledge therein; to which those vagabond and counterfeit Egyptians[49] did after pretend, and perhaps retained a few corrupted principles, which sometimes might verify their prognostics.

It is the common wonder of all men, how among so many millions of faces, there should be none alike; now contrary, I wonder as much how there should be any. He that shall consider how many thousand several words have been carelessly and without study composed out of twenty-four letters; withal, how many hundred lines there are to be drawn in the fabric of one man, shall easily find that this variety is necessary; and it will be very hard that they shall so concur as to make one portrait like another. Let a painter carelessly limn out a million of faces, and you shall find them all different; yea, let him have his copy before him, yet after all his art there will remain a sensible distinction; for the pattern or example of everything is the perfectest in that kind, whereof we still come short, though we transcend or go beyond it, because herein it is wide, and agrees not in all points unto the copy. Nor doth the similitude of creatures disparage the variety of nature, nor any way confound the works

[48] palmistry.
[49] i.e., Gypsies.

of God. For even in things alike there is diversity; and those that do seem to accord do manifestly disagree. And thus is man like God; for in the same things that we resemble him, we are utterly different from him. There was never anything so like another as in all points to concur: there will ever some reserved difference slip in, to prevent the identity; without which, two several things would not be alike, but the same, which is impossible.

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There is, I think, no man that apprehends his own miseries less than myself, and no man that so nearly apprehends another's. I could lose an arm without a tear, and with few groans, methinks, be quartered into pieces; yet can I weep most seriously at a play, and receive with true passion the counterfeit grief of those known and professed impostures. It is a barbarous part of inhumanity to add unto any afflicted party's misery, or endeavour to multiply in any man a passion whose single nature is already above his patience. This was the greatest affliction of Job, and those oblique expostulations of his friends a deeper injury than the downright blows of the Devil. It is not the tears of our own eyes only, but of our friends also, that do exhaust the current of our sorrows; which, falling into many streams, runs more peaceably, and is contented with a narrower channel. It is an act within the power of charity, to translate a passion out of one breast into another, and to divide a sorrow almost out of itself; for an affliction, like a dimension, may be so divided, as, if not indivisible, at least to become insensible. Now with my friend I desire not to share or participate, but to engross, his sorrows; that, by making them mine own, I may more easily discuss them; for in mine own reason, and within myself, I can command that which I cannot entreat without myself, and within the circle of another. I have often thought those noble pairs and examples of friendship not so truly histories of what had been, as fictions of what should be; but I now perceive nothing in them but possibilities, nor any-

thing in the heroic examples of Damon and Pythias, Achilles and Patroclus, which, methinks, upon some grounds, I could not perform within the narrow compass of myself. That a man should lay down his life for his friend, seems strange to vulgar affections, and such as confine themselves within that worldly principle, *Charity begins at home.* For mine own part I could never remember the relations that I held unto myself, nor the respect that I owe unto my own nature, in the cause of God, my country, and my friends. Next to these three, I do embrace myself. I confess I do not observe that order that the schools ordain our affections,—to love our parents, wives, children, and then our friends; for, excepting the injunctions of religion, I do not find in myself such a necessary and indissoluble sympathy to all those of my blood. I hope I do not break the fifth commandment, if I conceive I may love my friend before the nearest of my blood, even those to whom I owe the principles of life. I never yet cast a true affection on a woman; but I have loved my friend as I do virtue, my soul, my God. From hence methinks I do conceive how God loves man, what happiness there is in the love of God. Omitting all other, there are three most mystical unions: (1) two natures in one person; (2) three persons in one nature; (3) one soul in two bodies; for though, indeed, they be really divided, yet are they so united as they seem but one, and make rather a duality than two distinct souls.

There are wonders in true affection: it is a body of enigmas, mysteries, and riddles; wherein two so become one, as they both become two. I love my friend before myself, and yet methinks I do not love him enough; some few months hence my multiplied affection will make me believe I have not loved him at all. When I am from him, I am dead till I be with him; when I am with him, I am not satisfied, but would still be nearer him. United souls are not satisfied with embraces, but desire to be truly each other; which being impossible, their desires are infinite, and must proceed without a possibility of satisfaction. Another misery

there is in affection, that whom we truly love like our own selves, we forget their looks, nor can our memory retain the idea of their faces; and it is no wonder, for they are ourselves, and our affection makes their looks our own. This noble affection falls not on vulgar and common constitutions, but on such as are marked for virtue; he that can love his friend with this noble ardor will in a competent degree affect all. Now, if we can bring our affections to look beyond the body, and cast an eye upon the soul, we have found out the true object, not only of friendship, but charity; and the greatest happiness that we can bequeath the soul, is that wherein we all do place our last felicity, salvation; which though it be not in our power to bestow, it is in our charity and pious invocations to desire, if not procure and further. I cannot contentedly frame a prayer for myself in particular, without a catalogue for my friends; nor request a happiness, wherein my sociable disposition doth not desire the fellowship of my neighbour. I never hear the toll of a passing bell, though in my mirth, without my prayers and best wishes for the departing spirit; I cannot go to cure the body of my patient, but I forget my profession, and call unto God for his soul; I cannot see one say his prayers, but, instead of imitating him, I fall into a supplication for him, who perhaps is no more to me than a common nature; and if God hath vouchsafed an ear to my supplications, there are surely many happy that never saw me, and enjoy the blessing of mine unknown devotions. To pray for enemies, that is, for their salvation, is no harsh precept, but the practice of our daily and ordinary devotions. I cannot believe the story of the Italian,[50] our bad wishes and uncharitable desires proceed no further than this life; it is the Devil, and the uncharitable votes of hell, that desire our misery in the world to come.

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I was never yet once, and commend their resolutions who never

[50] who, as Browne tells the story in *Vulgar Errors*, "after he had inveigled his enemy to disclaim his faith for the redemption of his life, did presently poniard him, to prevent repentance, and assure his eternal death."

marry twice. Not that I disallow of second marriage; as neither, in all cases, of polygamy, which, considering some times, and the unequal number of both sexes, may be also necessary. The whole world was made for man, but the twelfth part of man for woman: man is the whole world, and the breath of God; woman the rib and crooked piece of man. I could be content that we might procreate like trees, without conjunction, or that there were any way to perpetuate the world without this trivial and vulgar way of union: it is the foolishest act a wise man commits in all his life; nor is there anything that will more deject his cooled imagination, when he shall consider what an odd and unworthy piece of folly he hath committed. I speak not in prejudice, nor am averse from that sweet sex, but naturally amorous of all that is beautiful. I can look a whole day with delight upon a handsome picture, though it be but of an horse. It is my temper, and I like it the better, to affect all harmony; and sure there is music even in the beauty and the silent note which Cupid strikes, far sweeter than the sound of an instrument. For there is a music wherever there is a harmony, order, or proportion; and thus far we may maintain the music of the spheres; for those well-ordered motions, and regular paces, though they give no sound unto the ear, yet to the understanding they strike a note most full of harmony. Whosoever is harmonically composed, delights in harmony; which makes me much distrust the symmetry of those heads which declaim against all church-music. For myself, not only from my obedience, but my particular genius, I do embrace it; for even that vulgar and tavern-music, which makes one man merry, another mad, strikes in me a deep fit of devotion, and a profound contemplation of the first composer. There is something in it of divinity more than the ear discovers: it is an hieroglyphical and shadowed lesson of the whole world, and creatures of God; such a melody to the ear, as the whole world, well understood, would afford the understanding. In brief, it is a sensible fit of that harmony which intellectually sounds in the ears of God. I will

not say, with Plato, the soul is an harmony, but harmonical, and hath its nearest sympathy unto music; thus some, whose temper of body agrees and humours the constitution of their souls, are born poets, though indeed all are naturally inclined unto rhythm. This made Tacitus, in the very first line of his story, fall upon a verse; and Cicero, the worst of poets, but declaiming for a poet, falls in the very first sentence upon a perfect hexameter. I feel not in me those sordid and unchristian desires of my profession; I do not secretly implore and wish for plagues, rejoice at famines, revolve ephemerides [51] and almanacs in expectation of malignant aspects, fatal conjunctions, and eclipses. I rejoice not at unwholesome springs, nor unseasonable winters: my prayer goes with the husbandman's; I desire everything in its proper season, that neither men nor the times be put out of temper. Let me be sick myself, if sometimes the malady of my patient be not a disease unto me. I desire rather to cure his infirmities than my own necessities. Where I do him no good, methinks it is scarce honest gain; though I confess 'tis but the worthy salary of our well-intended endeavours. I am not only ashamed, but heartily sorry, that, besides death, there are diseases incurable; yet not for my own sake, or that they be beyond my art, but for the general cause and sake of humanity, whose common cause I apprehend as mine own. And to speak more generally, those three noble professions which all civil commonwealths do honour, are raised upon the fall of Adam, and are not any way exempt from their infirmities; there are not only diseases incurable in physic, but cases indissolvable in laws, vices incorrigible in divinity. If general councils may err, I do not see why particular courts should be infallible: their perfectest rules are raised upon the erroneous reasons of man, and the laws of one do but condemn the rules of another; as Aristotle oft-times the opinions of his predecessors, because, though agreeable to reason,

[51] astrological charts.

yet were not consonant to his own rules, and the logic of his proper principles. Again, (to speak nothing of the sin against the Holy Ghost, whose cure not only, but whose nature is unknown) I can cure the gout or stone in some, sooner than divinity, pride, or avarice in others. I can cure vices by physic when they remain incurable by divinity, and shall obey my pills when they contemn their precepts. I boast nothing, but plainly say, we all labour against our own cure; for death is the cure of all diseases. There is no *catholicon* or universal remedy I know, but this; which, though nauseous to queasy stomachs, yet to prepared appetites is nectar, and a pleasant potion of immortality.

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Now for my life, it is a miracle of thirty years, which to relate, were not a history, but a piece of poetry, and would sound to common ears like a fable. For the world, I count it not an inn, but an hospital; and a place not to live, but to die in. The world that I regard is myself; it is the microcosm of my own frame that I cast mine eye on; for the other, I use it but like my globe, and turn it round sometimes for my recreation. Men that look upon my outside, perusing only my condition and fortunes, do err in my altitude; for I am above Atlas's shoulders. The earth is a point not only in respect of the heavens above us, but of that heavenly and celestial part within us; that mass of flesh that circumscribes me, limits not my mind; that surface that tells the heavens it hath an end, cannot persuade me I have any. I take my circle to be above three hundred and sixty; though the number of the arc [52] do measure my body, it comprehendeth not my mind. Whilst I study to find how I am a microcosm, or little world, I find myself something more than the great. There is surely a piece of divinity in us, something that was before the elements, and owes no homage unto the sun. Nature tells me I am the image of God, as well as Scripture; he that understands

[52] circumference of a circle.

not thus much, hath not his introduction or first lesson, and is yet to begin the alphabet of man. Let me not injure the felicity of others, if I say I am as happy as any. *Ruat cœlum, fiat voluntas tua,*[53] salveth all; so that whatsoever happens, it is but what our daily prayers desire. In brief, I am content; and what should providence add more? Surely this is it we call happiness, and this do I enjoy; with this I am happy in a dream, and as content to enjoy a happiness in a fancy as others in a more apparent truth and realty. There is surely a nearer apprehension of anything that delights us in our dreams than in our waked senses. Without this I were unhappy; for my awaked judgment discontents me, ever whispering unto me, that I am from my friend; but my friendly dreams in the night requite me, and make me think I am within his arms. I thank God for my happy dreams, as I do for my good rest; for there is a satisfaction in them unto reasonable desires, and such as can be content with a fit of happiness. And surely it is not a melancholy conceit to think we are all asleep in this world, and that the conceits of this life are as mere dreams to those of the next; as the phantasms of the night to the conceits of the day. There is an equal delusion in both, and the one doth but seem to be the emblem or picture of the other: we are somewhat more than ourselves in our sleeps, and the slumber of the body seems to be but the waking of the soul. It is the ligation[54] of sense, but the liberty of reason; and our waking conceptions do not match the fancies of our sleeps. At my nativity my ascendant was the watery sign of Scorpius; I was born in the planetary hour of Saturn, and I think I have a piece of that leaden planet in me. I am no way facetious, nor disposed for the mirth and galliardize[55] of company; yet in one dream I can compose a whole comedy, behold the action, apprehend the jests, and laugh myself awake at the

[53] "Thy will be done, though the heavens fall."
[54] binding.
[55] merriment.

conceits thereof. Were my memory as faithful as my reason is then fruitful, I would never study but in my dreams; and this time also would I choose for my devotions; but our grosser memories have then so little hold of our abstracted understandings, that they forget the story, and can only relate to our awakened souls a confused and broken tale of that that hath passed. Aristotle, who hath written a singular tract *Of Sleep,* hath not, methinks, thoroughly defined it; nor yet Galen, though he seem to have corrected it; for those noctambuloes [56] and night-walkers, though in their sleep, do yet enjoy the action of their senses. We must therefore say that there is something in us that is not in the jurisdiction of Morpheus; and that those abstracted and ecstatic souls do walk about in their own corps, as spirits with the bodies they assume, wherein they seem to hear, see, and feel, though indeed the organs are destitute of sense, and their natures of those faculties that should inform them. Thus it is observed, that men sometimes, upon the hour of their departure, do speak and reason above themselves; for then the soul, beginning to be freed from the ligaments of the body, begins to reason like herself, and to discourse in a strain above mortality.

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Now, there is another part of charity, which is the basis and pillar of this, and that is the love of God, for whom we love our neighbour; for this I think charity, to love God for Himself, and our neighbour for God. All that is truly amiable is God, or as it were a divided piece of Him, that retains a reflex or shadow of Himself. Nor is it strange that we should place affection on that which is invisible: all that we truly love is thus; what we adore under affection of our senses, deserves not the honour of so pure a title. Thus we adore virtue, though to the eyes of sense she be invisible; thus that part of our noble friends that we love, is not that part that we embrace, but that insensible

[56] somnambulista.

part that our arms cannot embrace. God, being all goodness, can love nothing but Himself; He loves us but for that part which is as it were Himself, and the traduction [57] of His holy Spirit. Let us call to assize the loves of our parents, the affection of our wives and children, and they are all dumb shows and dreams, without reality, truth, or constancy. For first there is a strong bond of affection between us and our parents; yet how easily dissolved! We betake ourselves to a woman, forget our mother in a wife, and the womb that bare us in that that shall bear our image. This woman blessing us with children, our affection leaves the level it held before, and sinks from our bed unto our issue and picture of posterity, where affection holds no steady mansion. They, growing up in years, desire our ends; or applying themselves to a woman, take a lawful way to love another better than ourselves. Thus I perceive a man may be buried alive, and behold his grave in his own issue.

I conclude therefore, and say, there is no happiness under (or, as Copernicus will have it, *above*) the sun, nor any crambe [58] in that repeated verity and burthen of all the wisdom of Solomon, *All is vanity and vexation of spirit.* There is no felicity in that the world adores. Aristotle, whilst he labors to refute the ideas of Plato, falls upon one himself; for his *summum bonum* [59] is a chimæra, and there is no such thing as his felicity. That wherein God Himself is happy, the holy Angels are happy, in whose defect the devils are unhappy, that dare I call happiness; whatsoever conduceth unto this, may with an easy metaphor deserve that name; whatsoever else the world terms happiness, is to me a story out of Pliny, a tale of Boccace or Malizspini,[60] an apparition, or neat delusion, wherein there is no more of happiness than the name. Bless me in this life with but peace of my con-

[57] propagation.
[58] wearisome reiteration.
[59] greatest good.
[60] another Italian writer of *novelle.*

science, command of my affections, the love of Thyself and my dearest friends, and I shall be happy enough to pity Cæsar. These are, O Lord, the humble desires of my most reasonable ambition, and all I dare call happiness on earth; wherein I set no rule or limit to Thy hand or providence. Dispose of me according to the wisdom of Thy pleasure: Thy will be done, though in my own undoing.

Cowley

Cowley

(1618-1667)

Though Abraham Cowley in his own day was praised extravagantly as a poet, he is now far better remembered as an essayist. His small but secure position in literary history rests chiefly upon two features of his slender volume of prose: his successful recapture of something of the mood of the Montaigne essay; and his easy, unlabored style. The influence of Montaigne is very evident; Cowley makes definite acknowledgement of this, as in the sentence which begins "Of Greatness": "Since we cannot attain to greatness, says the Sieur de Montaigne, let us have our revenge by railing at it." As to the other point, Cowley is commonly given credit for having been the first familiar essayist in English to write in a style that is nearly akin to that of good conversation. He has, however, more than historical interest to commend him to our attention. He repeats one favorite topic, the advantages of retirement from the distractions of courts and cities. This, it has been suggested, was forced upon him by the circumstances of his own career, first, because of his Royalist leanings, in exile abroad, and later, when the Restoration brought him but an inadequate reward for his loyalty, in seclusion in England. Yet his praise of the simpler pleasures of a more primitive life somehow rings true. In "Of Myself" he presents, without disguise, the central theme of the familiar essay. The modern reader may perhaps take exception to his abundant use of classical quotation; otherwise, he will grant that Cowley passes the decisive test of the true personal essayist in making the "hard and nice subject" of self-portraiture so attractive.

Of Myself

IT IS a hard and nice [1] subject for a man to write of himself; it grates his own heart to say anything of disparagement and the reader's ears to hear anything of praise from him. There

[1] delicate.

is no danger from me of offending him in this kind; neither my mind, nor my body, nor my fortune allow me any materials for that vanity. It is sufficient for my own contentment that they have preserved me from being scandalous, or remarkable on the defective side. But besides that, I shall here speak of myself only in relation to the subject of these precedent discourses,[2] and shall be likelier thereby to fall into the contempt than rise up to the estimation of most people. As far as my memory can return back into my past life, before I knew or was capable of guessing what the world, or glories, or business of it were, the natural affections of my soul gave me a secret bent of aversion from them, as some plants are said to turn away from others, by an antipathy imperceptible to themselves and inscrutable to man's understanding. Even when I was a very young boy at school, instead of running about on holidays and playing with my fellows, I was wont to steal from them and walk into the fields, either alone with a book, or with some one companion, if I could find any of the same temper. I was then, too, so much an enemy to all constraint, that my masters could never prevail on me, by any persuasions or encouragements, to learn without book the common rules of grammar, in which they dispensed with me alone, because they found I made a shift to do the usual exercise out of my own reading and observation. That I was then of the same mind as I am now (which I confess I wonder at myself) may appear by the latter end of an ode which I made when I was but thirteen years old, and which was then printed with many other verses. The beginning of it is boyish, but of this part which I here set down, if a very little were corrected. I should hardly now be much ashamed.

IX

This only grant me, that my means may lie
Too low for envy, for contempt too high.

[2] "Of Myself" is the last of Cowley's eleven *Discourses by Way of Essays, in Verse and Prose.*

Some honour I would have,
Not from great deeds, but good alone.
The unknown are better than ill known.
Rumour can ope the grave;
Acquaintance I would have, but when 't depends
Not on the number, but the choice of friends.

X

Books should, not business, entertain the light,
And sleep, as undisturbed as death, the night.
My house a cottage, more
Than palace, and should fitting be
For all my use, no luxury.
My garden painted o'er
With Nature's hand, not Art's; and pleasures yield,
Horace might envy in his Sabine field.

XI

Thus would I double my life's fading space,
For he that runs it well twice runs his race.
And in this true delight,
These unbought sports, this happy state,
I would not fear, nor wish my fate,
But boldly say each night,
To-morrow let my sun his beams display,
Or in clouds hide them—I have lived to-day.[3]

You may see by it I was even then acquainted with the poets (for the conclusion is taken out of Horace),[4] and perhaps it was the immature and immoderate love of them which stamped first, or rather engraved, these characters in me. They were like letters cut into the bark of a young tree, which with the tree still grow proportionably. But how this love came to be produced in me so early is a hard question. I believe I can tell the particular little chance that filled my head first with such chimes of verse as have never since left ringing there. For I remember

[3] These stanzas are the conclusion of "A Vote," from *Sylva*, published in 1636.
[4] cf. *Odes* III, xxix, 41.

when I began to read, and to take some pleasure in it, there was wont to lie in my mother's parlour (I know not by what accident, for she herself never in her life read any book but of devotion), but there was wont to lie Spenser's works; this I happened to fall upon, and was infinitely delighted with the stories of the knights, and giants, and monsters, and brave houses, which I found everywhere there (though my understanding had little to do with all this); and by degrees with the tinkling of the rhyme and dance of the numbers, so that I think I had read him all over before I was twelve years old, and was thus made a poet as immediately as a child is made an eunuch. With these affections of mind, and my heart wholly set upon letters, I went to the university, but was soon torn from thence by that violent public storm [5] which would suffer nothing to stand where it did, but rooted up every plant, even from the princely cedars to me, the hyssop. Yet I had as good fortune as could have befallen me in such a tempest; for I was cast by it into the family of one of the best persons, and into the court of one of the best princesses of the world. Now though I was here engaged in ways most contrary to the original design of my life, that is, into much company, and no small business, and into a daily sight of greatness, both militant and triumphant, for that was the state then of the English and French Courts; yet all this was so far from altering my opinion, that it only added the confirmation of reason to that which was before but natural inclination. I saw plainly all the paint of that kind of life, the nearer I came to it; and that beauty which I did not fall in love with when, for aught I knew, it was real, was not like to bewitch or entice me when I saw that it was adulterate. I met with several great persons, whom I liked very well, but could not perceive that any part of their greatness was to be liked or desired, no more than I would be glad or content to be in a storm, though I saw many

[5] the Civil War.

ships which rid safely and bravely in it. A storm would not agree with my stomach, if it did with my courage. Though I was in a crowd of as good company as could be found anywhere, though I was in business of great and honourable trust, though I eat at the best table, and enjoyed the best conveniences for present subsistence that ought to be desired by a man of my condition in banishment and public distresses, yet I could not abstain from renewing my old schoolboy's wish in a copy of verses to the same effect.

> Well then; I now do plainly see,
> This busy world and I shall ne'er agree,[6] etc.

And I never then proposed to myself any other advantage from His Majesty's happy restoration,[7] but the getting into some moderately convenient retreat in the country, which I thought in that case I might easily have compassed, as well as some others, with no greater probabilities or pretences, have arrived to extraordinary fortunes. But I had before written a shrewd prophecy against myself, and I think Apollo inspired me in the truth, though not in the elegance of it.

> Thou, neither great at court nor in the war,
> Nor at th' exchange shalt be, nor at the wrangling bar;
> Content thyself with the small barren praise,
> Which neglected verse does raise,[8] etc.

However, by the failing of the forces which I had expected, I did not quit the design which I had resolved on; I cast myself into it *à corps perdu*,[9] without making capitulations or taking counsel of fortune. But God laughs at a man who says to his soul, "Take thy ease": I met presently not only with many little encumbrances and impediments, but with so much sickness (a

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[6] the opening of "The Wish," from *The Mistress* (1647).
[7] the accession of Charles II, in 1660.
[8] from "Destiny" (1656).
[9] headlong.

new misfortune to me) as would have spoiled the happiness of an emperor as well as mine. Yet I do neither repent nor alter my course. *Non ego perfidum dixi sacramentum.*[10] Nothing shall separate me from a mistress which I have loved so long, and have now at last married, though she neither has brought me a rich portion, nor lived yet so quietly with me as I hoped from her.

——*Nec vos, dulcissima mundi*
Nomina, vos Musæ, libertas, otia, libri,
Hortique sylvæque anima remanente relinquam.

Nor by me e'er shall you,
You of all names the sweetest, and the best,
You Muses, books, and liberty, and rest,
You gardens, fields, and woods forsaken be,
As long as life itself forsakes not me.

But this is a very petty ejaculation. Because I have concluded all the other chapters with a copy of verses, I will maintain the humour to the last.

MARTIAL, BOOK 10, EPIGRAM 47

Vitam quæ faciunt beatiorem, etc.

Since, dearest friend, 't is your desire to see
A true receipt of happiness from me;
These are the chief ingredients, if not all:
Take an estate neither too great nor small,
Which *quantum sufficit* [11] the doctors call.
Let this estate from parents' care descend:
The getting it too much of life does spend.
Take such a ground, whose gratitude may be
A fair encouragement for industry.
Let constant fires the winter's fury tame,
And let thy kitchen's be a vestal flame.

[10] I have not sworn an oath which is to be broken. (Horace.)
[11] a medical phrase meaning "as much as is required."

Thee to the town let never suit at law,
And rarely, very rarely, business draw.
Thy active mind in equal temper keep,
In undisturbéd peace, yet not in sleep.
Let exercise a vigorous health maintain,
Without which all the composition 's vain.
In the same weight prudence and innocence take,
Ana[12] of each does the just mixture make.
But a few friendships wear, and let them be
By Nature and by Fortune fit for thee.
Instead of art and luxury in food,
Let mirth and freedom make thy table good.
If any cares into thy daytime creep,
At night, without wine's opium, let them sleep.
Let rest, which Nature does to darkness wed,
And not lust, recommend to thee thy bed.
Be satisfied, and pleased with what thou art;
Act cheerfully and well the allotted part,
Enjoy the present hour, be thankful for the past,
And neither fear, nor wish the approaches of the last.

MARTIAL, BOOK 10, EPIGRAM 96

Me, who have lived so long among the great,
You wonder to hear talk of a retreat:
And a retreat so distant, as may show
No thoughts of a return when once I go.
Give me a country, how remote so e'er,
Where happiness a moderate rate does bear,
Where poverty itself in plenty flows
And all the solid use of riches knows.
The ground about the house maintains it there,
The house maintains the ground about it here.
Here even hunger 's dear, and a full board
Devours the vital substance of the lord.
The land itself does there the feast bestow,
The land itself must here to market go.
Three or four suits one winter here does waste,
One suit does there three or four winters last.

[12] equal quantities of the ingredients.

Here every frugal man must oft be cold,
And little lukewarm fires are to you sold.
There fire 's an element as cheap and free
Almost as any of the other three.
Stay you then here, and live among the great,
Attend their sports, and at their tables eat.
When all the bounties here of men you score,
The place's bounty there shall give me more.

Defoe

Defoe

(1661?-1731)

Daniel Defoe is the most notable of the predecessors of Steele and Addison in the field of the periodical essay. His is decidedly the editorial point of view, the essay becoming essentially a commentary on the news of the day; indeed, the modern editorial can be traced directly to his *Review*. The present essay comes, however, not from the *Review*, which came to an end in 1712, but from *Applebee's Journal*, to which Defoe contributed this paper in 1722 hence it represents a later date than the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*. In its original setting it was one of a series of articles or, as Defoe called them, "letters introductory," which formed even a nearer approach than his work in the *Review* to the later "leading article" or editorial. The reflections inspired by the funeral of Marlborough, that spectacularly successful general, suggest possibilities as an essayist which, because of the author's hasty and voluminous writing, were but imperfectly realized.

The Instability of Human Glory

SIR, I have employed myself of late pretty much in the study of history, and have been reading the stories of the great men of past ages, Alexander the Great, Julius Cæsar, the great Augustus, and many more down, down, down, to the still greater Louis XIV., and even to the still greatest John, Duke of Marlborough. In my way I met with Tamerlane, the Scythian, Tomornbejus, the Egyptian, Solyman, the Magnificent, and others of the Mahometan or Ottoman race; and after all the great things they have done I find it said of them all, one after another, AND THEN HE DIED, all dead, dead, dead! *hic jacet* [1] is the

[1] "Here lies"—the beginning of many epitaphs.

finishing part of their history. Some lie in the bed of honour, and some in honour's truckle bed;[2] some were bravely slain in battle on the field of honour, some in the storm of a counterscarp[3] and died in the ditch of honour; some here, some there;—the bones of the bold and the brave, the cowardly and the base, the hero and the scoundrel, are heaped up together;—there they lie in oblivion, and under the ruins of the earth, undistinguished from one another, nay, even from the common earth.

> Huddled in dirt the blust'ring engine[4] lies,
> That was so great, and thought himself so wise.

How many hundreds of thousands of the bravest fellows then in the world lie on heaps in the ground, whose bones are to this day ploughed up by the rustics, or dug by the labourer, and the earth their more noble vital parts are converted to has been perhaps applied to the meanest uses!

How have we screened the ashes of heroes to make our mortar, and mingled the remains of a Roman general to make a hog sty! Where are the ashes of a Cæsar, and the remains of a Pompey, a Scipio, or a Hannibal? All are vanished, they and their very monuments are mouldered into earth, their dust is lost, and their place knows them no more. They live only in the immortal writings of their historians and poets, the renowned flatterers of the age they lived in, and who have made us think of the persons, not as they really were, but as they were pleased to represent them.

As the greatest men, so even the longest lived. The Methuselahs of the antediluvian world—the accounts of them all end with the same. Methuselah lived nine hundred sixty and nine years and begat sons and daughters—and what then? AND THEN HE DIED.

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[2] a cot on wheels, which might be pushed under an ordinary bed.
[3] the outer slope of a rampart.
[4] here in the sense of "human machine."

Death like an overflowing stream
Sweeps us away; our life's a dream.

We are now solemnising the obsequies of the great Marlborough; all his victories, all his glories, his great projected schemes of war, his uninterrupted series of conquests, which are called his, as if he alone had fought and conquered by his arm, what so many men obtained for him with their blood—all is ended, where other men, and, indeed, where all men ended: HE IS DEAD.

Not all his immense wealth, the spoils and trophies of his enemies, the bounty of his grateful Mistress, and the treasure amassed in war and peace, not all that mighty bulk of gold—which some suggest is such, and so great, as I care not to mention—could either give him life, or continue it one moment, but he is dead; and some say the great treasure he was possessed of here had one strange particular quality attending it, which might have been very dissatisfying to him if he had considered much on it, namely, that he could not carry much of it with him.

We have now nothing left us of this great man that we can converse with but his monument and his history. He is now numbered among things past. The funeral as well as the battles of the Duke of Marlborough are like to adorn our houses in sculpture as things equally gay and to be looked on with pleasure. Such is the end of human glory, and so little is the world able to do for the greatest men that come into it, and for the greatest merit those men can arrive to.

What then is the work of life? What the business of great men, that pass the stage of the world in seeming triumph as these men, we call heroes, have done? Is it to grow great in the mouth of fame and take up many pages in history? Alas! that is no more than making a tale for the reading of posterity till it turns into fable and romance. Is it to furnish subject to the poets, and live in their immortal rhymes, as they call them? That is, in short, no more than to be hereafter turned into ballad and song and be sung by old women to quiet children, or at the

corner of a street to gather crowds in aid of the pickpocket and the poor. Or is their business rather to add virtue and piety to their glory, which alone will pass them into eternity and make them truly immortal? What is glory without virtue? A great man without religion is no more than a great beast without a soul. What is honour without merit? And what can be called true merit but that which makes a person be a good man as well as a great man?

If we believe in a future state of life, a place for the rewards of good men and for the punishment of the haters of virtue, how few crowned heads wear the crowns of immortal felicity!

Let no man envy the great and glorious men, as we call them! Could we see them now, how many of them would move our pity rather than call for our congratulations! These few thoughts, sir, I send to prepare your readers' minds when they go to see the magnificent funeral of the late Duke of Marlborough.

Steele

Steele

(1672-1729)

Richard Steele unites a zeal for reform with the frankest and most agreeable personal revelation. He established an early literary reputation through his comedies, but later came to feel, doubtless in part because of Defoe's work in the *Review*, that the periodical essay offered both a more congenial and a more effective medium. The "Prospectus" to the *Tatler*, in spite of its air of banter, admirably suggests the purposes and scope of the new undertaking. Steele's preoccupation with the reformation of manners and morals is illustrated in such a paper as "Duelling," which originally was one of a series on the subject. The institution of the duel, so successfully satirized here, had already been a target for Steele's attack in his best-known play, *The Conscious Lovers*. To ridicule fashionable vices and foibles was to appeal most effectively to the middle class audience that formed a large part of the new reading public.

But it is not enough to think of Steele as merely a moralist and a reformer. Such thoroughly personal essays as "A Day in London" and, still more, "Recollections of Childhood" are at least equally characteristic. Injustice is all too often done to Steele in considering him as merely the satellite of Addison. It should be remembered, in the first place, that Steele was the more inventive of the two: the design of the *Tatler* was his, and probably the creation of the Spectator Club, with its chief glory, Sir Roger de Coverley. What is perhaps more important from the point of view of this book is the obvious superiority of Steele in the familiar essay, to use the term in its strictest sense. There is no reticence about him, none of the aloofness and reserve which characterize Addison. The ingenuousness with which he sets forth his own faults and weaknesses—perhaps too freely, for the good of his later reputation—is quite without parallel in the far more objective work of his collaborator. It is this side of him that makes the reader agree with Thackeray's feeling: "I own to liking Dick Steele the man, and Dick Steele the author, much better than much better men and much better author."

Prospectus

Tatler No. 1

Quicquid agunt homines . . . nostri farrago libelli.[1]

THOUGH the other papers which are published for the use of the good people of England have certainly very wholesome effects, and are laudable in their particular kinds, yet they do not seem to come up to the main design of such narrations, which, I humbly presume, should be principally intended for the use of politic persons, who are so public-spirited as to neglect their own affairs to look into transactions of state. Now these gentlemen, for the most part, being men of strong zeal and weak intellects, it is both a charitable and necessary work to offer something whereby such worthy and well-affected members of the commonwealth may be instructed, after their reading, what to think; which shall be the end and purpose of this my paper, wherein I shall from time to time report and consider all matters of what kind soever that shall occur to me, and publish such my advices and reflections every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday in the week, for the convenience of the post.[2] I have also resolved to have something which may be of entertainment to the fair sex, in honour of whom I have taken the title of this paper. I therefore earnestly desire all persons, without distinction, to take it in, for the present, gratis, and hereafter at the price of one penny, forbidding all hawkers to take more for it at their peril. And I desire my readers to consider, that I am at a very great charge for proper materials for this work, as well as that, before I resolved upon it, I had settled a correspondence in all parts of the known and knowing world. And forasmuch as this globe is not trodden upon by mere drudges of business only, but

[1] Whatever men do is the burden of our little book (Juvenal).
[2] since the mails left London on these days.

that men of spirit and genius are justly to be esteemed as considerable agents in it, we shall not, upon a dearth of news, present you with musty foreign edicts, or dull proclamations, but shall divide our relation of the passages which occur in action or discourse throughout this town, as well as elsewhere, under such dates of places as may prepare you for the matter you are to expect, in the following manner:

All accounts of gallantry, pleasure, and entertainment, shall be under the article of White's [3] Chocolate-house; poetry, under that of Will's Coffee-house; learning, under the title of Grecian; foreign and domestic news, you will have from St. James's Coffee-house; and what else I shall on any other subject offer, shall be dated from my own apartment.

I once more desire my reader to consider that as I cannot keep an ingenious man to go daily to Will's under twopence each day merely for his charges, to White's under sixpence, nor to the Grecian without allowing him some plain Spanish,[4] to be as able as others at the learned table; and that a good observer cannot speak with even Kidney [5] at St. James's without clean linen; I say, these considerations will, I hope, make all persons willing to comply with my humble request (when my gratis stock is exhausted) of a penny a piece; especially since they are sure of some proper amusement, and that it is impossible for me to want means to entertain them, having, besides the helps of my own parts, the power of divination, and that I can, by casting a figure, tell you all that will happen before it comes to pass.

But this last faculty I shall use very sparingly, and not speak of anything until it is passed, for fear of divulging matters which may offend our superiors.

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[3] This and the following ones were taverns well known in the London of Queen Anne.
[4] i.e., wine.
[5] the head waiter; here a pun on another meaning of "even kidney" (i.e., "unruffled temper") is intended.

Duelling

Tatler No. 29.[6]

White's Chocolate-house, June 14

HAVING a very solid respect for human nature, however it is distorted from its natural make by affectation, humour, custom, misfortune, or vice, I do apply myself to my friends to help me in raising arguments for preserving it in all its individuals, as long as it is permitted. To one of my letters on this subject, I have received the following answer:

Sir,

In answer to your question, why men of sense, virtue, and experience are seen still to comply with that ridiculous custom of duelling, I must desire you to reflect that custom has dished up in ruffs the wisest heads of our ancestors, and put the best of the present age into huge falbala periwigs.[7] Men of sense would not impose such encumbrances on themselves, but be glad they might show their faces decently in public upon easier terms. If, then, such men appear reasonably slaves to the fashion, in what regards the figure of their persons, we ought not to wonder that they are at least so in what seems to touch their reputations. Besides, you can't be ignorant that dress and chivalry have been always encouraged by the ladies as the two principal branches of gallantry. It is to avoid being sneered at for his singularity, and from a desire to appear more agreeable to his mistress, that a wise, experienced, and polite man complies with the dress commonly received, and is prevailed upon to violate his reason and principles in hazarding his life and estate by a tilt, as well as suffering his pleasures to be constrained and soured by the constant apprehension of a quarrel. This is the more surprising, because men of the most delicate sense and principles have naturally in other cases a particular repugnance in accommodating themselves to the maxims of the world; but one may easily distinguish the man that is affected with beauetry and the reputation of a tilt from him who complies with both merely as they are imposed upon him by custom; for in the former you will remark an air of vanity and

[6] Only the first part of this number is here given.
[7] the more elaborate (or "furbelow") periwigs, often of ridiculous length at this time.

triumph, whereas when the latter appears in a long Duvillier[8] full of powder, or has decided a quarrel by the sword, you may perceive in his face that he appeals to custom for an excuse. I think it may not be improper to inquire into the genealogy of this chimerical monster called a duel, which I take to be an illegitimate species of the ancient knight-errantry. By the laws of this whim, your heroic person, or man of gallantry, was indispensably obliged to starve in armour a certain number of years in the chase of monsters, encounter them at the peril of his life, and suffer great hardships in order to gain the affection of the fair lady, and qualify himself for assuming the *bel air*, that is, of a pretty fellow, or man of honour according to the fashion: but since the publishing of *Don Quixote* and extinction of the race or dragons, which Suetonius says happened in that of Wantley,[9] the gallant and heroic spirits of these later times have been under the necessity of creating new chimerical monsters to entertain themselves with, by way of single combats, as the only proofs they are able to give their own sex, and the ladies, that they are in all points men of nice honour. But to do justice to the ancient and real monsters, I must observe that they never molested those who were not of a humour to hunt for them in the woods and deserts; whereas, on the contrary, our modern monsters are so familiarly admitted and entertained in all the courts and cities of Europe (except France)[10] that one can scarce be in the most humanised society without risking one's life; the people of the best sort and the fine gentlemen of the age being so fond of them that they seldom appear in any public place without one. I have some further considerations upon this subject which, as you encourage me, shall be communicated to you by, Sir, a cousin but once removed from the best family of the Staffs, namely,

Sir,
Your humble Servant,
Kinsman and Friend,
Tim. Switch.

It is certain, Mr. Switch has hit upon the true source of this evil, and that it proceeds only from the force of custom that we contradict ourselves in half the particulars and occurrences of life. But such a tyranny in love, which the fair impose upon us,

[8] the name of a French maker of wigs, and of the wig itself.
[9] The dragon of Wantley is the theme of an old ballad, not, of course, to be found in Suetonius, as Steele humorously suggests.
[10] where duelling was at this time effectually forbidden.

is a little too severe, that we must demonstrate our affection for them by no certain proof but hatred to one another, or come at them (only as one does to an estate) by survivorship. This way of application to gain a lady's heart is taking her as we do towns and castles, by distressing the place and letting none come near them without our pass. Were such a lover once to write the truth of his heart, and let her know his whole thoughts, he would appear indeed to have a passion for her; but it would hardly be called love. The billet-doux would run to this purpose:

Madame,

I have so tender a regard for you and your interests that I 'll knock any man in the head whom I observe to be of my mind, and like you. Mr. Truman the other day looked at you in so languishing a manner that I am resolved to run him through to-morrow morning; this, I think, he deserves for his guilt in admiring you, than which I cannot have a greater reason for murdering him, except it be that you also approve him. Whoever says he dies for you, I will make his words good; for I will kill him. I am,

Madame,

Your most obedient,

Most humble Servant.

Recollections of Childhood

Tatler No. 181

——Dies, ni fallor, adest, quem semper acerbum,
Semper honoratum (sic di voluistis), habebo.[11]

From my own Apartment, June 5

THERE are those among mankind who can enjoy no relish of their being except the world is made acquainted with all that relates to them, and think everything lost that passes un-

[11] The day has come, if I mistake not, which I shall hold ever bitter, and ever sacred; for so the gods have willed (Vergil).

observed; but others find a solid delight in stealing by the crowd, and modelling their life after such a manner as is as much above the approbation as the practice of the vulgar. Life being too short to give instances great enough of true friendship or goodwill, some sages have thought it pious to preserve a certain reverence for the manes of their deceased friends; and have withdrawn themselves from the rest of the world at certain seasons, to commemorate in their own thoughts such of their acquaintance who have gone before them out of this life. And indeed, when we are advanced in years, there is not a more pleasing entertainment than to recollect in a gloomy moment the many we have parted with that have been dear and agreeable to us, and to cast a melancholy thought or two after those with whom, perhaps, we have indulged ourselves in whole nights of mirth and jollity. With such inclinations in my heart I went to my closet yesterday in the evening, and resolved to be sorrowful; upon which occasion I could not but look with disdain upon myself, that though all the reasons which I had to lament the loss of many of my friends are now as forcible as at the moment of their departure, yet did not my heart swell with the same sorrow which I felt at that time; but I could, without tears, reflect upon many pleasing adventures I have had with some who have long been blended with common earth. Though it is by the benefit of nature that length of time thus blots out the violence of afflictions; yet with tempers too much given to pleasure, it is almost necessary to revive the old places of grief in our memory, and ponder step by step on past life, to lead the mind into that sobriety of thought which poises the heart, and makes it beat with due time, without being quickened with desire, or retarded with despair, from its proper and equal motion. When we wind up a clock that is out of order, to make it go well for the future, we do not immediately set the hand to the present instant, but we make it strike the round of all its hours, before it can recover the regularity of its time. "Such," thought I,

"shall be my method this evening; and since it is that day of the year which I dedicate to the memory of such in another life as I much delighted in when living, an hour or two shall be sacred to sorrow and their memory, while I run over all the melancholy circumstances of this kind which have occurred to me in my whole life."

The first sense of sorrow I ever knew was upon the death of my father, at which time I was not quite five years of age; but was rather amazed at what all the house meant than possessed with a real understanding why nobody was willing to play with me. I remember I went into the room where his body lay, and my mother sat weeping alone by it. I had my battledore in my hand, and fell a-beating the coffin, and calling "Papa"; for, I know not how, I had some slight idea that he was locked up there. My mother catched me in her arms, and, transported beyond all patience[12] of the silent grief she was before in, she almost smothered me in her embrace, and told me in a flood of tears, papa could not hear me, and would play with me no more, for they were going to put him under ground, whence he could never come to us again. She was a very beautiful woman, of a noble spirit, and there was a dignity in her grief amidst all the wildness of her transport which, methought, struck me with an instinct of sorrow, which, before I was sensible of what it was to grieve, seized my very soul, and has made pity the weakness of my heart ever since. The mind in infancy is, methinks, like the body in embryo, and receives impressions so forcible that they are as hard to be removed by reason as any mark with which a child is born is to be taken away by any future application. Hence it is that good-nature in me is no merit; but having been so frequently overwhelmed with her tears before I knew the cause of any affliction, or could draw defences from my own judgment, I imbibed commiseration, remorse, and an unmanly

[12] enduring.

gentleness of mind, which has since ensnared me into ten thousand calamities; and from whence I can reap no advantage, except it be that in such a humour as I am now in, I can the better indulge myself in the softness of humanity, and enjoy that sweet anxiety which arises from the memory of past afflictions.

We that are very old are better able to remember things which befell us in our distant youth than the passages of later days. For this reason it is that the companions of my strong and vigorous years present themselves more immediately to me in this office of sorrow. Untimely or unhappy deaths are what we are most apt to lament, so little are we able to make it indifferent when a thing happens, though we know it must happen. Thus we groan under life, and bewail those who are relieved from it. Every object that returns to our imagination raises different passions according to the circumstance of their departure. Who can have lived in an army, and in a serious hour reflect upon the many gay and agreeable men that might long have flourished in the arts of peace, and not join with the imprecations of the fatherless and widow on the tyrant to whose ambition they fell sacrifices? But gallant men, who are cut off by the sword, move rather our veneration than our pity; and we gather relief enough from their own contempt of death, to make it no evil, which was approached with so much cheerfulness, and attended with so much honour. But when we turn our thoughts from the great parts of life on such occasions, and instead of lamenting those who stood ready to give death to those from whom they had the fortune to receive it; I say, when we let our thoughts wander from such noble objects, and consider the havoc which is made among the tender and the innocent, pity enters with an unmixed softness, and possesses all our souls at once.

Here (were there words to express such sentiments with proper tenderness) I should record the beauty, innocence, and untimely death of the first object my eyes ever beheld with

love. The beauteous virgin! How ignorantly did she charm, how carelessly excel! O, Death! thou hast right to the bold, to the ambitious, to the high, and to the haughty; but why this cruelty to the humble, to the meek, to the undiscerning, to the thoughtless? Nor age, nor business, nor distress can erase the dear image from my imagination. In the same week, I saw her dressed for a ball, and in a shroud. How ill did the habit of Death become the pretty trifler! I still behold the smiling earth —A large train of disasters were coming on to my memory, when my servant knocked at my closet-door, and interrupted me with a letter, attended with a hamper of wine, of the same sort with that which is to be put to sale on Thursday next at Garraway's Coffee-house. Upon the receipt of it, I sent for three of my friends. We are so intimate that we can be company in whatever state of mind we meet, and can entertain each other without expecting always to rejoice. The wine we found to be generous and warming, but with such a heat as moved us rather to be cheerful than frolicsome. It revived the spirits without firing the blood. We commended it till two of the clock this morning; and having to-day met a little before dinner, we found that, though we drank two bottles a man, we had much more reason to recollect than forget what had passed the night before.

A Day in London

Spectator No. 454

Sine me, vacivum tempus ne quod dem mihi Laboris.[13]—TER.

IT IS an inexpressible pleasure to know a little of the world, and be of no character or significancy in it.

To be ever unconcerned, and ever looking on new objects with an endless curiosity, is a delight known only to those who are

[13] Permit me to give myself no respite from labor.

turned for speculation: nay, they who enjoy it must value things only as they are the objects of speculation, without drawing any worldly advantage to themselves from them, but just as they are what contribute to their amusement, or the improvement of the mind. I lay one night last week at Richmond; and being restless, not out of dissatisfaction, but a certain busy inclination one sometimes has, I rose at four in the morning, and took boat for London, with a resolution to rove by boat and coach for the next four-and-twenty hours, till the many different objects I must needs meet with should tire my imagination, and give me an inclination to a repose more profound than I was at that time capable of. I beg people's pardon for an odd humour I am guilty of, and was often that day, which is saluting any person whom I like, whether I know him or not. This is a particularity which would be tolerated in me, if they considered that the greatest pleasure I know I receive at my eyes, and that I am obliged to an agreeable person for coming abroad into my view, as another is for a visit of conversation at their own houses.

The hours of the day and night are taken up in the cities of London and Westminster, by people as different from each other as those who are born in different centuries. Men of six o'clock give way to those of nine, they of nine to the generation of twelve; and they of twelve disappear, and make room for the fashionable world, who have made two o'clock the noon of the day.

When we first put off from shore, we soon fell in with a fleet of gardeners, bound for the several market ports of London; and it was the most pleasing scene imaginable to see the cheerfulness with which those industrious people plied their way to a certain sale of their goods. The banks on each side are as well peopled, and beautified with as agreeable plantations, as any spot on the earth; but the Thames itself, loaded with the product of each shore, added very much to the landscape. It was very easy to observe by their sailing, and the countenances

of the ruddy virgins, who were supercargoes, the parts of the town to which they were bound. There was an air in the purveyors for Covent-garden, who frequently converse with morning rakes, very unlike the seeming sobriety of those bound for Stocks-market.[14]

Nothing remarkable happened in our voyage; but I landed with ten sail of apricot-boats, at Strand-bridge, after having put in at Nine-Elms, and taken in melons, consigned by Mr. Cuffe, of that place, to Sarah Sewell and Company, at their stall in Covent-garden. We arrived at Strand-bridge at six of the clock, and were unloading; when the hackney-coachmen of the foregoing night took their leave of each other at the Darkhouse, to go to bed before the day was too far spent. Chimney-sweepers passed by us as we made up to the market, and some raillery happened between one of the fruit-wenches and those black men about the Devil and Eve, with allusion to their several professions. I could not believe any place more entertaining than Covent-garden, where I strolled from one fruit-shop to another, with crowds of agreeable young women around me, who were purchasing fruit for their respective families. It was almost eight of the clock before I could leave that variety of objects. I took coach and followed a young lady, who tripped into another just before me, attended by her maid. I saw immediately she was of the family of the Vainloves. There are a set of these, who, of all things, affect the play of Blind-man's-buff, and leading men into love for they know not whom, who are fled they know not where. This sort of woman is usually a jaunty slattern; she hangs on her clothes, plays her head, varies her posture, and changes place incessantly, and all with an appearance of striving at the same time to hide herself, and yet give you to understand she is in humour to laugh at you. You must have often seen the coachmen make signs with their fingers, as they

[14] a flower and vegetable market.

drive by each other, to intimate how much they have got that day. They can carry on that language to give intelligence where they are driving. In an instant my coachman took the wink to pursue; and the lady's driver gave the hint that he was going through Long-acre towards St. James's; while he whipped up James-street, we drove for King-street, to save the pass at St. Martin's-lane. The coachmen took care to meet, jostle, and threaten each other for way, and be entangled at the end of Newport-street and Longe-acre. The fright, you must believe, brought down the lady's coach-door, and obliged her, with her mask off, to inquire into the bustle,—when she sees the man she would avoid. The tackle of the coach-window is so bad she cannot draw it up again, and she drives on sometimes wholly discovered, and sometimes half-escaped, according to the accident of carriages in her way. One of these ladies keeps her seat in a hackney-coach, as well as the best rider does on a managed horse. The laced shoe on her left foot, with a careless gesture, just appearing on the opposite cushion, held her both firm, and in a proper attitude to receive the next jolt.

As she was an excellent coach-woman, many were the glances at each other which we had for an hour and a half, in all parts of the town, by the skill of our drivers; till at last my lady was conveniently lost, with notice from her coachman to ours to make off, and he should hear where she went. This chase was now at an end: and the fellow who drove her came to us, and discovered that he was ordered to come again in an hour, for that she was a silk-worm. I was surprised with this phrase, but found it was a cant among the hackney fraternity for their best customers, women who ramble twice or thrice a week from shop to shop, to turn over all the goods in town without buying anything. The silk-worms are, it seems, indulged by the tradesmen; for, though they never buy, they are ever talking of new silks, laces, and ribbons, and serve the owners in getting them customers, as their common dunners do in making them pay.

The day of people of fashion began now to break, and carts and hacks were mingled with equipages of show and vanity; when I resolved to walk it out of cheapness; but my unhappy curiosity is such, that I find it always my interest to take coach; for some odd adventure among beggars, ballad-singers, or the like, detains and throws me into expense. It happened so immediately: for at the corner of Warwick-street, as I was listening to a new ballad, a ragged rascal, a beggar who knew me, came up to me, and began to turn the eyes of the good company upon me, by telling me he was extremely poor, and should die in the street for want of drink, except I immediately would have the charity to give him sixpence to go into the next ale-house and save his life. He urged, with a melancholy face, that all his family had died of thirst. All the mob have humour, and two or three began to take the jest; by which Mr. Sturdy carried his point, and let me sneak off to a coach. As I drove along, it was a pleasing reflection to see the world so prettily checkered since I left Richmond, and the scene still filling with children of a new hour. This satisfaction increased as I moved towards the city; and gay signs, well-disposed streets, magnificent public structures, and wealthy shops adorned with contented faces, made the joy still rising till we came into the centre of the city, and centre of the world of trade, the Exchange of London. As other men in the crowds about me were pleased with their hopes and bargains, I found my account in observing them, in attention to their several interests. I, indeed, looked upon myself as the richest man that walked the Exchange that day; for my benevolence made me share the gains of every bargain that was made. It was not the least of my satisfaction in my survey, to go upstairs, and pass the shops of agreeable females; to observe so many pretty hands busy in the folding of ribbons, and the utmost eagerness of agreeable faces in the sale of patches, pins, and wires, on each side of the counters, was an amusement in which I could longer have indulged myself, had not the dear

creatures called to me, to ask what I wanted, when I could not answer, only "To look at you." I went to one of the windows which opened to the area below, where all the several voices lost their distinction, and rose up in a confused humming; which created in me a reflection that could not come into the mind of any but of one a little too studious; for I said to myself with a kind of pun in thought, "What nonsense is all the hurry of this world to those who are above it?" In these, or not much wiser thoughts, I had like to have lost my place at the chop-house, where every man, according to the natural bashfulness or sullenness of our nation, eats in a public room a mess of broth, or chop of meat, in dumb silence, as if they had no pretence to speak to each other on the foot of being men, except they were of each other's acquaintance.

I went afterward to Robin's,[15] and saw people, who had dined with me at the five-penny ordinary just before, give bills for the value of large estates; and could not but behold with great pleasure, property lodged in, and transferred in a moment from, such as would never be masters of half as much as is seemingly in them, and given from them, every day they live. But before five in the afternoon I left the city, came to my common scene of Covent-garden, and passed the evening at Will's[16] in attending the discourses of several sets of people, who relieved each other within my hearing on the subjects of cards, dice, love, learning, and politics. The last subject kept me till I heard the streets in the possession of the bellman, who had now the world to himself, and cried, "Past two o'clock." This roused me from my seat; and I went to my lodgings, led by a light,[17] whom I put into the discourse of his private economy, and made him give me an account of the charge, hazard, profit, and loss of a family that depended upon a link, with a design to end my

[15] a coffee-house in Exchange Alley.
[16] cf. p. 169.
[17] linksman. The streets of London were not yet lighted.

trivial day with the generosity of sixpence, instead of a third part of that sum. When I came to my chambers, I writ down these minutes: but was at a loss what instruction I should propose to my reader from the enumeration of so many insignificant matters and occurrences; and I thought it of great use, if they could learn with me to keep their minds open to gratification, and ready to receive it from any thing it meets with. This one circumstance will make every face you see give you the satisfaction you now take in beholding that of a friend; will make every object a pleasing one; will make all the good which arrives to any man, an increase of happiness to yourself.

The Spectator Club

Spectator No. 2

——*Haec alii sex*
Vel plures uno conclamant ore.[18]—Juv.

THE first of our society is a gentleman of Worcestershire, of ancient descent, a baronet, his name Sir Roger de Coverley. His great-grandfather was inventor of that famous country-dance which is called after him. All who know that shire are very well acquainted with the parts and merits of Sir Roger. He is a gentleman that is very singular in his behaviour, but his singularities proceed from his good sense, and are contradictions to the manners of the world only as he thinks the world is in the wrong. However, this humour creates him no enemies, for he does nothing with sourness or obstinacy; and his being unconfined to modes and forms makes him but the readier and more capable to please and oblige all who know him. When he is in town, he lives in Soho Square.[19] It is said he keeps himself

[18] Six others and more cry out with one voice.
[19] then a fashionable part of London.

a bachelor by reason he was crossed in love by a perverse, beautiful widow of the next county to him. Before this disappointment, Sir Roger was what you call a fine gentleman; had often supped with my Lord Rochester and Sir George Etherege, fought a duel upon his first coming to town, and kicked Bully Dawson [20] in a public coffee-house for calling him "youngster." But being ill-used by the above-mentioned widow, he was very serious for a year and a half; and though, his temper being naturally jovial, he at last got over it, he grew careless of himself, and never dressed afterwards. He continues to wear a coat and doublet of the same cut that were in fashion at the time of his repulse, which, in his merry humours, he tells us, has been in and out twelve times since he first wore it. 'Tis said Sir Roger grew humble in his desires after he had forgot this cruel beauty, insomuch that it is reported he has frequently offended in point of chastity with beggars and gypsies; but this is looked upon by his friends rather as matter of raillery than truth. He is now in his fifty-sixth year, cheerful, gay, and hearty; keeps a good house in both town and country; a great lover of mankind; but there is such a mirthful cast in his behaviour that he is rather beloved than esteemed. His tenants grow rich, his servants look satisfied, all the young women profess love to him, and the young men are glad of his company. When he comes into a house, he calls the servants by their names, and talks all the way up-stairs to a visit. I must not omit, that Sir Roger is a justice of the quorum; that he fills the chair at a quarter session with great abilities, and, three months ago, gained universal applause by explaining a passage in the Game Act.

The gentleman next in esteem and authority among us is another bachelor, who is a member of the Inner Temple [21]; a man of great probity, wit, and understanding; but he has chosen his

[20] notorious figures of Restoration London; the first two, writers of some distinction as well as celebrated rakes, the last a gamester and brawler.
[21] a legal society.

place of residence rather to obey the direction of an old humoursome father, than in pursuit of his own inclinations. He was placed there to study the laws of the land, and is the most learned of any of the house in those of the stage. Aristotle and Longinus are much better understood by him than Littleton or Coke.[22] The father sends up, every post, questions relating to marriage-articles, leases, and tenures, in the neighbourhood; all which questions he agrees with an attorney to answer and take care of in the lump. He is studying the passions themselves, when he should be inquiring into the debates among men which arise from them. He knows the argument of each of the orations of Demosthenes and Tully, but not one case in the reports of our own courts. No one ever took him for a fool; but none, except his intimate friends, know he has a great deal of wit. This turn makes him at once both disinterested and agreeable: as few of his thoughts are drawn from business, they are most of them fit for conversation. His taste of books is a little too just for the age he lives in; he has read all, but approves of very few. His familiarity with the customs, manners, actions, and writings of the ancients makes him a very delicate observer of what occurs to him in the present world. He is an excellent critic, and the time of the play is his hour of business; exactly at five he passes through New Inn, crosses through Russell Court, and takes a turn at Will's till the play begins; he has his shoes rubbed and his periwig powdered at the barber's as you go into the Rose. It is for the good of the audience when he is at a play, for the actors have an ambition to please him.

The person of next consideration is Sir Andrew Freeport, a merchant of great eminence in the city of London. A person of indefatigable industry, strong reason, and great experience. His notions of trade are noble and generous, and (as every rich man has usually some sly way of jesting, which would make no

[22] authors of standard legal treatises.

great figure were he not a rich man) he calls the sea the British Common. He is acquainted with commerce in all its parts, and will tell you that it is a stupid and barbarous way to extend dominion by arms: for true power is to be got by arts and industry. He will often argue, that if this part of our trade were well cultivated, we should gain from one nation; and if another, from another. I have heard him prove that diligence makes more lasting acquisitions than valour, and that sloth has ruined more nations than the sword. He abounds in several frugal maxims, among which the greatest favourite is, "A penny saved is a penny got." A general trader of good sense is pleasanter company than a general scholar; and Sir Andrew having a natural unaffected eloquence, the perspicuity of his discourse gives the same pleasure that wit would in another man. He has made his fortune himself; and says that England may be richer than other kingdoms, by as plain methods as he himself is richer than other men; though at the same time I can say this of him, that there is not a point in the compass, but blows home a ship in which he is an owner.

Next to Sir Andrew in the club-room sits Captain Sentry, a gentleman of great courage, good understanding, but invincible modesty. He is one of those that deserve very well, but are very awkward at putting their talents within the observation of such as should take notice of them. He was some years a captain, and behaved himself with great gallantry in several engagements and at several sieges; but having a small estate of his own, and being next heir to Sir Roger, he has quitted a way of life in which no man can rise suitably to his merit, who is not something of a courtier as well as a soldier. I have heard him often lament, that in a profession where merit is placed in so conspicuous a view, impudence should get the better of modesty. When he had talked to this purpose, I never heard him make a sour expression, but frankly confess that he left the world because he was not fit for it. A strict honesty, and an even

regular behaviour, are in themselves obstacles to him that must press through crowds who endeavour at the same end with himself, the favour of a commander. He will, however, in his way of talk excuse generals for not disposing according to men's desert, or inquiring into it; for, says he, that great man who has a mind to help me, has as many to break through to come at me, as I have to come at him; therefore he will conclude, that the man who would make a figure, especially in a military way, must get over all false modesty, and assist his patron against the importunity of other pretenders, by a proper assurance in his own vindication. He says it is a civil cowardice to be backward in asserting what you ought to expect, as it is a military fear to be slow in attacking when it is your duty. With this candour does the gentleman speak of himself and others. The same frankness runs through all his conversation. The military part of his life has furnished him with many adventures, in the relation of which he is very agreeable to the company; for he is never overbearing, though accustomed to command men in the utmost degree below him; nor ever too obsequious, from a habit of obeying men highly above him.

But that our society may not appear a set of humourists, unacquainted with the gallantries and pleasures of the age, we have among us the gallant Will Honeycomb, a gentleman who, according to his years, should be in the decline of his life, but having ever been very careful of his person, and always had a very easy fortune, time has made but very little impression, either by wrinkles on his forehead, or traces in his brain. His person is well turned, of a good height. He is very ready at that sort of discourse with which men usually entertain women. He has all his life dressed very well, and remembers habits as others do men. He can smile when one speaks to him, and laughs easily. He knows the history of every mode, and can inform you from which of the French king's wenches our wives and daughters had this manner of curling their hair, that way of

placing their hoods; whose frailty was covered by such a sort of petticoat, and whose vanity to show her foot made that part of the dress so short in such a year. In a word, all his conversation and knowledge has been in the female world. As other men of his age will take notice to you what such a minister said upon such and such an occasion, he will tell you, when the Duke of Monmouth [23] danced at court, such a woman was then smitten —another was taken with him at the head of his troop in the Park. In all these important relations, he has ever about the same time received a kind glance, or a blow of a fan from some celebrated beauty, mother of the present Lord Such-a-one. If you speak of a young commoner that said a lively thing in the house, he starts up, "He has good blood in his veins, Tom Mirabel begot him; the rogue cheated me in that affair; that young fellow's mother used me more like a dog than any woman I ever made advances to." This way of talking of his very much enlivens the conversation among us of a more sedate turn; and I find there is not one of the company, but myself, who rarely speak at all, but speaks of him as of that sort of man, who is usually called a well-bred fine gentleman. To conclude his character, where women are not concerned, he is an honest, worthy man.

I cannot tell whether I am to account him whom I am next to speak of as one of our company, for he visits us but seldom; but when he does, it adds to every man else a new enjoyment of himself. He is a clergyman, a very philosophic man, of general learning, great sanctity of life, and the most exact good-breeding. He has the misfortune to be of a very weak constitution, and consequently cannot accept of such cares and business as preferments in his function would oblige him to; he is therefore among divines what a chamber-counsellor is among lawyers. The probity of his mind and the integrity of his life create him

[23] an illegitimate son of Charles II.

followers, as being eloquent or loud advances others. He seldom introduces the subject he speaks upon; but we are so far gone in years that he observes, when he is among us, an earnestness to have him fall on some divine topic, which he always treats with much authority, as one who has no interests in this world, as one who is hastening to the object of all his wishes, and conceives hope from his decays and infirmities. These are my ordinary companions.

Addison

Addison

(1672-1719)

Joseph Addison has traditionally been considered the most finished of the eighteenth century periodical essayists, and the best exemplar of the new prose that dates from the period just before his own. He contributed to Steele's *Tatler* and joined in the founding of the *Spectator*. In the latter periodical he soon took the leading part, so that his name rather than Steele's has come to be identified with projects that were originally Steele's. Nor is it entirely inaccurate to think of *Addison's Spectator* and *Addison's* Sir Roger de Coverley. For, in the upshot, both the journal itself and its most famous single characterization are principally his. It may be profitable, then, to inquire what new notes were contributed by Addison.

Strictly as a personal essayist, it is to be admitted that Addison must bow to Steele. Into the character of the imaginary Mr. Spectator he put traits that are essentially his own; and this detached observer, reticent and dignified, is not precisely the ideal familiar essayist. Addison, that is to say, is much less in the Montaigne tradition than Steele or Cowley, so that it is not surprising that his essays are better remembered for their skillful and effective social satire than for any more personal qualities. He is very nearly at his best when dealing with the "lesser immoralities," with follies and foibles, as in "Fans," rather than with crimes and vices. His, like Steele's, is the middle class point of view; such a portrait as Will Wimble clearly evinces a distrust of the aristocratic traditions.

As a master of a style that is simple and direct, yet polished and correct, Addison is, perhaps rightly, preferred to Steele. What Thackeray observed of his collaborator, "the great charm of Steele's writing is its naturalness," will scarcely be said of him in the same degree; for it is evident that he does not, like Steele, sacrifice even grammatical correctness in the endeavor to catch the actual accents of speech. On Addison's successful avoidance of both the over-pompous and the over-colloquial, Johnson, albeit with evident partiality, has said the last word: "Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison." It has justly been pointed out, however, that this famous praise after all is addressed to the apprentice writer,

and asserts nothing more than that Addison is the safest guide to follow; he may be that, of course, without being one of the greatest of writers. Far greater masters than Addison—Milton and Browne, for example—have written so distinctly personal an idiom that they are notoriously unsafe guides. It seems fair to suggest that Addison has been, in the past, somewhat overrated, and that it is possible to believe that he and Steele contributed a service of primary importance to English letters and English manners, without believing that intrinsically their work is of first value. The reader will be more likely to enjoy their pleasant and witty sketches for what they are if he does not expect what he will assuredly not find, the marks of absolute genius.

Mr. Spectator

Spectator No. 1

Non fumum ex fulgore, sed ex fumo dare lucem
Cogitat, ut speciosa dehinc miracula promat.[1]—HOR.

I HAVE observed that a reader seldom peruses a book with pleasure till he knows whether the writer of it be a black or a fair man, of a mild or choleric disposition, married or a bachelor, with other particulars of the like nature, that conduce very much to the right understanding of an author. To gratify this curiosity, which is so natural in a reader, I design this paper and my next as prefatory discourses to my following writings, and shall give some account in them of the several persons that are engaged in this work. As the chief trouble of compiling, digesting, and correcting will fall to my share, I must do myself the justice to open the work with my own history.

I was born to a small hereditary estate, which, according to the tradition of the village where it lies, was bounded by the same hedges and ditches in William the Conqueror's time that it is at present, and has been delivered down from father to son,

[1] He plans to bring forth not smoke after flame, but after smoke the light, so that he may produce wonderful sights.

whole and entire, without the loss or acquisition of a single field or meadow, during the space of six hundred years. There runs a story in the family, that, when my mother was gone with child of me about three months, she dreamed that she was brought to bed of a judge. Whether this might proceed from a law-suit which was then depending in the family, or my father's being a justice of the peace, I cannot determine; for I am not so vain as to think it presaged any dignity that I should arrive at in my future life, though that was the interpretation which the neighbourhood put upon it. The gravity of my behaviour at my very first appearance in the world, and all the time that I sucked, seemed to favour my mother's dream: for, as she has often told me, I threw away my rattle before I was two months old, and would not make use of my coral till they had taken away the bells from it.

As for the rest of my infancy, there being nothing in it remarkable, I shall pass over it in silence. I find that during my nonage, I had the reputation of a very sullen youth, but was always a favourite of my schoolmaster, who used to say, that my parts were solid, and would wear well. I had not been long at the university before I distinguished myself by a most profound silence; for during the space of eight years, excepting in the public exercises of the college, I scarce uttered the quantity of a hundred words; and indeed do not remember that I ever spoke three sentences together in my whole life. While I was in this learned body, I applied myself with so much diligence to my studies, that there are few very celebrated books, either in the learned or the modern tongues, which I am not acquainted with.

Upon the death of my father, I was resolved to travel into foreign countries, and therefore left the university with the character of an odd, unaccountable fellow, that had a great deal of learning, if I would but show it. An insatiable thirst after knowledge carried me into all the countries of Europe

in which there was anything new or strange to be seen; nay, to such a degree was my curiosity raised, that having read the controversies of some great men concerning the antiquities of Egypt, I made a voyage to Grand Cairo on purpose to take the measure of a pyramid; and, as soon as I had set myself right in that particular, returned to my native country with great satisfaction.

I have passed my latter years in this city, where I am frequently seen in most public places, though there are not above half-a-dozen of my select friends that know me; of whom my next paper shall give a more particular account. There is no place of general resort wherein I do not often make my appearance. Sometimes I am seen thrusting my head into a round of politicians at Will's, and listening with great attention to the narratives that are made in those little circular audiences. Sometimes I smoke a pipe at Child's, and whilst I seem attentive to nothing but the *Postman*,[2] overhear the conversation of every table in the room. I appear on Sunday nights at St. James's coffee-house, and sometimes join the little committee of politics in the inner room, as one who comes there to hear and improve. My face is likewise very well known at the Grecian, the Cocoa-tree, and in the theaters both of Drury-lane and the Haymarket. I have been taken for a merchant upon the exchange for above these ten years, and sometimes pass for a Jew in the assembly of stock-jobbers at Jonathan's. In short, wherever I see a cluster of people, I always mix with them, though I never open my lips but in my own club.

Thus I live in the world rather as a Spectator of mankind than as one of the species, by which means I have made myself a speculative statesman, soldier, merchant, and artisan, without ever meddling with any practical part in life. I am very well versed in the theory of a husband, or a father, and

[2] a newspaper which appeared, like the *Tatler*, three times a week.

can discern the errors in the economy, business, and diversions of others, better than those who are engaged in them; as standers-by discover blots,[3] which are apt to escape those who are in the game. I never espoused any party with violence, and am resolved to observe a strict neutrality between the Whigs and Tories, unless I shall be forced to declare myself by the hostilities of either side. In short, I have acted in all the parts of my life as a looker-on, which is the character I intend to preserve in this paper.

I have given the reader just so much of my history and character as to let him see I am not altogether unqualified for the business I have undertaken. As for other particulars in my life and adventures, I shall insert them in following papers as I shall see occasion. In the mean time, when I consider how much I have seen, read, and heard, I begin to blame my own taciturnity; and since I have neither time nor inclination to communicate the fulness of my heart in speech, I am resolved to do it in writing, and to print myself out, if possible, before I die. I have been often told by my friends that it is pity so many useful discoveries which I have made, should be in the possession of a silent man. For this reason, therefore, I shall publish a sheetful of thoughts every morning for the benefit of my contemporaries; and if I can any way contribute to the diversion or improvement of the country in which I live, I shall leave it, when I am summoned out of it, with the secret satisfaction of thinking that I have not lived in vain.

There are three very material points which I have not spoken to in this paper, and which, for several important reasons, I must keep to myself, at least for some time: I mean, an account of my name, my age, and my lodgings. I must confess, I would gratify my reader in anything that is reasonable; but, as for these three particulars, though I am sensible

[3] a technical term in the game of backgammon, meaning the situation of a piece left exposed to capture.

they might tend very much to the embellishment of my paper, I cannot yet come to a resolution of communicating them to the public. They would indeed draw me out of that obscurity which I have enjoyed for many years, and expose me in public places to several salutes and civilities, which have been always very disagreeable to me; for the greatest pain I can suffer is the being talked to, and being stared at. It is for this reason likewise, that I keep my complexion and dress as very great secrets; though it is not impossible but I may make discoveries of both in the progress of the work I have undertaken.

After having been thus particular upon myself, I shall in to-morrow's paper give an account of those gentlemen who are concerned with me in this work; for, as I have before intimated, a plan of it is laid and concerted (as all other matters of importance are) in a club. However, as my friends have engaged me to stand in the front, those who have a mind to correspond with me, may direct their letters to the *Spectator*, at Mr. Buckley's in Little Britain. For I must further acquaint the reader, that though our club meets only on Tuesdays and Thursdays, we have appointed a committee to sit every night, for the inspection of all such papers as may contribute to the advancement of the public weal.

The Aim of "The Spectator"

Spectator No. 10

Non aliter quam qui adverso vix flumine lembum
Remigiis subigit, si bracchia forte remisit,
Atque illum præceps prono rapit alveus amni.[4]—VIRG.

IT IS with much satisfaction that I hear this great city inquiring day by day after these my papers, and receiving my

[4] Just as a man whose oars can scarcely urge the boat upstream is, if he relaxes his efforts, swept by the current headlong down the river.

morning lectures with a becoming seriousness and attention. My publisher tells me that there are already three thousand of them distributed every day; so that if I allow twenty readers to every paper, which I look upon as a modest computation, I may reckon about threescore thousand disciples in London and Westminster, who I hope will take care to distinguish themselves from the thoughtless herd of their ignorant and unattentive brethren. Since I have raised to myself so great an audience, I shall spare no pains to make their instruction agreeable, and their diversion useful. For which reasons I shall endeavour to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality, that my readers may, if possible, both ways find their account in the speculation of the day. And to the end that their virtue and discretion may not be short, transient, intermitting starts of thought, I have resolved to refresh their memories from day to day, till I have recovered them out of that desperate state of vice and folly into which the age is fallen. The mind that lies fallow for a single day sprouts up in follies that are only to be killed by a constant and assiduous culture. It was said of Socrates that he brought philosophy down from heaven, to inhabit among men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses.

I would therefore in a very particular manner recommend these my speculations to all well regulated families, that set apart an hour in every morning for tea and bread and butter; and would earnestly advise them for their good to order this paper to be punctually served up, and to be looked upon as a part of the tea-equipage.

Sir Francis Bacon observes that a well written book, compared with its rivals and antagonists, is like Moses's serpent, that immediately swallowed up and devoured those of the Egyptians. I shall not be so vain as to think that where the *Specta-*

tor appears, the other public prints will vanish; but shall leave it to my readers' consideration, whether is it not much better to be let into the knowledge of one's self, than to hear what passes in Muscovy or Poland; and to amuse ourselves with such writings as tend to the wearing out of ignorance, passion, and prejudice, than such as naturally conduce to inflame hatreds, and make enmities irreconcilable.

In the next place I would recommend this paper to the daily perusal of those gentlemen whom I cannot but consider as my good brothers and allies, I mean the fraternity of Spectators, who live in the world without having anything to do in it; and either by the affluence of their fortunes, or laziness of their dispositions, have no other business with the rest of mankind but to look upon them. Under this class of men are comprehended all contemplative tradesmen, titular physicians, fellows of the Royal Society,[5] Templars[6] that are not given to be contentious, and statesmen that are out of business; in short, every one that considers the world as a theater, and desires to form a right judgment of those who are the actors on it.

There is another set of men that I must likewise lay a claim to, whom I have lately called the blanks of society, as being altogether unfurnished with ideas, till the business and conversation of the day has supplied them. I have often considered these poor souls with an eye of great commiseration, when I have heard them asking the first man they have met with, whether there was any news stirring, and by that means gathering together materials for thinking. These needy persons do not know what to talk of, till about twelve o'clock in the morning; for by that time they are pretty good judges of the weather, know which way the wind sits, and whether the Dutch mail be come in. As they lie at the mercy of the first man

[5] The Royal Society, whose president at this time was Sir Isaac Newton, was frequently ridiculed by the *Spectator* essayists for what they considered its tendency to narrow specialization, at the expense of general culture.

[6] members of the Inner or the Middle Temple; cf. the note on p. 183.

they meet, and are grave or impertinent all the day long, according to the notions which they have imbibed in the morning, I would earnestly entreat them not to stir out of their chambers till they have read this paper, and do promise them that I will daily instill into them such sound and wholesome sentiments as shall have a good effect on their conversation for the ensuing twelve hours.

But there are none to whom this paper will be more useful than to the female world. I have often thought there has not been sufficient pains taken in finding out proper employments and diversions for the fair ones. Their amusements seem contrived for them, rather as they are women, than as they are reasonable creatures; and are more adapted to the sex than to the species. The toilet is their great scene of business, and the right adjusting of their hair the principal employment of their lives. The sorting of a suit of ribbons is reckoned a very good morning's work; and if they make an excursion to a mercer's or a toy-shop, so great a fatigue makes them unfit for anything else all the day after. Their more serious occupations are sewing and embroidery, and their greatest drudgery the preparation of jellies and sweetmeats. This, I say, is the state of ordinary women; though I know there are multitudes of those of a more elevated life and conversation, that move in an exalted sphere of knowledge and virtue, that join all the beauties of the mind to the ornaments of dress, and inspire a kind of awe and respect, as well as love, into their male beholders. I hope to increase the number of these by publishing this daily paper, which I shall always endeavour to make an innocent if not an improving entertainment, and by that means, at least, divert the minds of my female readers from greater trifles. At the same time, as I would fain give some finishing touches to those which are already the most beautiful pieces in human nature, I shall endeavour to point out all those imperfections that are the blemishes, as well as those virtues which

are the embellishments, of the sex. In the meanwhile, I hope these my gentle readers, who have so much time on their hands, will not grudge throwing away a quarter of an hour in a day on this paper, since they may do it without any hinderance to business.

I know several of my friends and well-wishers are in great pain for me, lest I should not be able to keep up the spirit of a paper which I oblige myself to furnish every day; but to make them easy in this particular, I will promise them faithfully to give it over as soon as I grow dull. This I know will be matter of great raillery to the small wits, who will frequently put me in mind of my promise, desire me to keep my word, assure me that it is high time to give over, with many other little pleasantries of the like nature, which men of a little smart genius cannot forbear throwing out against their best friends, when they have such a handle given them of being witty. But let them remember that I do hereby enter my caveat against this piece of raillery.

Mr. Spectator at His Club

Spectator No. 34

—parcit
Cognatis maculis similis fera [7]—Juv.

THE club of which I am a member is very luckily composed of such persons as are engaged in different ways of life, and deputed as it were out of the most conspicuous classes of mankind; by this means I am furnished with the greatest variety of hints and materials, and know everything that passes in the different quarters and divisions, not only of this great

[7] Wild beasts spare other beasts spotted like themselves.

city, but of the whole kingdom. My readers, too, have the satisfaction to find, that there is no rank or degree among them who have not their representative in this club, and that there is always somebody present who will take care of their respective interests, that nothing may be written or published to the prejudice or infringement of their just rights and privileges.

I last night sat very late in company with this select body of friends, who entertained me with several remarks which they and others had made upon these my speculations, as also with the various success, which they had met with among their several ranks and degrees of readers. Will Honeycomb told me, in the softest manner he could, that there were some ladies (but for your comfort, says Will, they are not those of the most wit) that were offended at the liberties I had taken with the opera and the puppet-show; that some of them were likewise very much surprised, that I should think such serious points as the dress and equipage of persons of quality proper subjects for raillery.

He was going on, when Sir Andrew Freeport took him up short, and told him, that the papers he hinted at had done great good in the city, and that all their wives and daughters were the better for them; and further added, that the whole city thought themselves very much obliged to me for declaring my generous intentions to scourge vice and folly as they appear in a multitude, without condescending to be a publisher of particular intrigues and cuckoldoms. In short, says Sir Andrew, if you avoid that foolish beaten road of falling upon aldermen and citizens, and employ your pen upon the vanity and luxury of courts, your paper must needs be of general use.

Upon this my friend the Templar told Sir Andrew, that he wondered to hear a man of his sense talk after that manner; that the city had always been the province for satire; and that the wits of King Charles's time jested upon nothing else during his whole reign. He then showed, by the examples of Horace,

Juvenal, Boileau, and the best writers of every age, that the follies of the stage and court had never been accounted too sacred for ridicule, how great soever the persons might be that patronized them. But after all, says he, I think your raillery has made too great an excursion, in attacking several persons of the inns of court; and I do not believe you can show me any precedent for your behaviour in that particular.

My good friend Sir Roger de Coverley, who had said nothing all this while, began his speech with a "Pish!" and told us, that he wondered to see so many men of sense so very serious upon fooleries. "Let our good friend," says he, "attack every one that deserves it; I would only advise you, Mr. Spectator," applying himself to me, "to take care how you meddle with country squires: they are the ornaments of the English nation; men of good heads and sound bodies! and let me tell you, some of them take it ill of you, that you mention fox hunters with so little respect."

Captain Sentry spoke very sparingly on this occasion. What he said was only to commend my prudence in not touching upon the army, and advised me to continue to act discreetly in that point.

By this time I found every subject of my speculations was taken away from me, by one or other of the club; and began to think myself in the condition of the good man that had one wife who took a dislike to his gray hairs, and another to his black, till by their picking out what each of them had an aversion to, they left his head altogether bald and naked.

While I was thus musing with myself, my worthy friend the clergyman, who, very luckily for me, was at the club that night, undertook my cause. He told us, that he wondered any order of persons should think themselves too considerable to be advised; that it was not quality, but innocence, which exempted men from reproof; that vice and folly ought to be attacked wherever they could be met with, and especially when

they were placed in high and conspicuous stations of life. He further added, that my paper would only serve to aggravate the pains of poverty, if it chiefly exposed those who are already depressed, and in some measure turned into ridicule, by the meanness of their conditions and circumstances. He afterwards proceeded to take notice of the great use this paper might be of to the public, by reprehending those vices which are too trivial for the chastisement of the law, and too fantastical for the cognisance of the pulpit. He then advised me to prosecute my undertaking with cheerfulness, and assured me, that whoever might be displeased with me, I should be approved by all those whose praises do honour to the persons on whom they are bestowed.

The whole club pays a particular deference to the discourse of this gentleman, and are drawn into what he says, as much by the candid and ingenuous manner with which he delivers himself, as by the strength of argument and force of reason which he makes use of. Will Honeycomb immediately agreed that what he had said was right; and that for his part, he would not insist upon the quarter which he had demanded for the ladies. Sir Andrew gave up the city with the same frankness. The Templar would not stand out, and was followed by Sir Roger and the Captain, who all agreed that I should be at liberty to carry the war into what quarter I pleased, provided I continued to combat with criminals in a body, and to assault the vice without hurting the person.

This debate, which was held for the good of mankind, put me in mind of that which the Roman triumvirate were formerly engaged in, for their destruction. Every man at first stood hard for his friend, till they found that by this means they should spoil their proscription; and at length, making a sacrifice of all their acquaintance and relations, furnished out a very decent execution.

Having thus taken my resolution to march on boldly in the

cause of virtue and good sense, and to annoy their adversaries in whatever degree or rank of men they may be found, I shall be deaf for the future to all the remonstrances that shall be made to me on this account. If Punch grow extravagant, I shall reprimand him very freely; if the stage becomes a nursery of folly and impertinence, I shall not be afraid to animadvert upon it. In short, if I meet with anything in city, court, or country, that shocks modesty or good manners, I shall use my utmost endeavours to make an example of it. I must, however, intreat every particular person, who does me the honour to be a reader of this paper, never to think himself, or any one of his friends or enemies, aimed at in what is said; for I promise him never to draw a faulty character which does not fit at least a thousand people, or to publish a single paper that is not written in the spirit of benevolence, and with a love to mankind.

Fans

Spectator No. 102

Lusus animo debent aliquando dari,
Ad cogitandum melior ut redeat sibi.[8]—PHAEDR.

I DO not know whether to call the following letter a satire upon coquettes, or a representation of their several fantastical accomplishments, or what other title to give it; but, as it is, I shall communicate it to the public. It will sufficiently explain its own intentions, so that I shall give it my reader at length, without either preface or postscript.

Mr. Spectator,

Women are armed with fans as men with swords, and sometimes do more execution with them. To the end therefore that ladies may be

[8] The mind should sometimes be diverted, so that it may return the better to thinking.

entire mistresses of the weapons which they bear, I have erected an academy for the training up of young women in the exercise of the fan, according to the most fashionable airs and motions that are now practised at court. The ladies who carry fans under me are drawn up twice a day in my great hall, where they are instructed in the use of their arms, and exercised by the following words of command:—Handle your fans, Unfurl your fans, Discharge your fans, Ground your fans, Recover your fans, Flutter your fans. By the right observation of these few plain words of command, a woman of a tolerable genius, who will apply herself diligently to her exercise for the space of but one half-year, shall be able to give her fan all the graces that can possibly enter into that little modish machine.

But to the end that my readers may form to themselves a right notion of this exercise, I beg leave to explain it to them in all its parts. When my female regiment is drawn up in array, with every one her weapon in her hand, upon my giving the word to Handle their fans, each of them shakes her fan at me with a smile, then gives her right-hand woman a tap upon the shoulder, then presses her lips with the extremity of her fan, then lets her arms fall in an easy motion, and stands in readiness to receive the next word of command. All this is done with a close fan, and is generally learned in the first week.

The next motion is that of unfurling the fan, in which are comprehended several little flirts and vibrations, as also gradual and deliberate openings, with many voluntary fallings asunder in the fan itself, that are seldom learned under a month's practice. This part of the exercise pleases the spectators more than any other, as it discovers on a sudden an infinite number of cupids, garlands, altars, birds, beasts, rainbows, and the like agreeable figures, that display themselves to view, whilst every one in the regiment holds a picture in her hand.

Upon my giving the word to Discharge their fans, they give one general crack that may be heard at a considerable distance when the wind sits fair. This is one of the most difficult parts of the exercise, but I have several ladies with me, who at their first entrance could not give a pop loud enough to be heard at the farther end of a room, who can now discharge a fan in such a manner, that it shall make a report like a pocket-pistol. I have likewise taken care (in order to hinder young women from letting off their fans in wrong places or on unsuitable occasions) to show upon what subject the crack of a fan may come in properly: I have likewise invented a fan, with which a girl of sixteen, by the help of a little wind which is inclosed about one of

the largest sticks, can make as loud a crack as a woman of fifty with an ordinary fan.

When the fans are thus discharged, the word of command in course is to Ground their fans. This teaches a lady to quit her fan gracefully when she throws it aside in order to take up a pack of cards, adjust a curl of hair, replace a falling pin, or apply herself to any other matter of importance. This part of the exercise, as it only consists in tossing a fan with an air upon a long table (which stands by for that purpose), may be learned in two days' time as well as in a twelvemonth.

When my female regiment is thus disarmed, I generally let them walk about the room for some time; when on a sudden (like ladies that look upon their watches after a long visit) they all of them hasten to their arms, catch them up in a hurry, and place themselves in their proper stations upon my calling out, Recover your fans. This part of the exercise is not difficult, provided a woman applies her thoughts to it.

The fluttering of the fan is the last, and indeed the masterpiece of the whole exercise; but if a lady does not misspend her time, she may make herself mistress of it in three months. I generally lay aside the dog-days and the hot time of the summer for the teaching of this part of the exercise; for as soon as ever I pronounce Flutter your fans, the place is filled with so many zephyrs and gentle breezes as are very refreshing in that season of the year, though they might be dangerous to ladies of a tender constitution in any other.

There is an infinite variety of motions to be made use of in the flutter of a fan. There is the angry flutter, the modest flutter, the timorous flutter, the confused flutter, the merry flutter, and the amorous flutter. Not to be tedious, there is scarce any emotion in the mind which does not produce a suitable agitation in the fan; insomuch, that if I only see the fan of a disciplined lady, I know very well whether she laughs, frowns, or blushes. I have seen a fan so very angry, that it would have been dangerous for the absent lover who provoked it to have come within the wind of it; and at other times so very languishing, that I have been glad for the lady's sake the lover was at sufficient distance from it. I need not add, that a fan is either a prude or coquette, according to the nature of the person who bears it. To conclude my letter, I must acquaint you that I have from my own observations compiled a little treatise for the use of my scholars, entitled, The Passions of the Fan; which I will communicate to you, if you think it may be of use to the public. I shall have a general review on

Thursday next; to which you shall be very welcome if you will honour it with your presence.

I am, &c.

P.S. I teach young gentlemen the whole art of gallanting a fan.

N.B. I have several little plain fans made for this use, to avoid expense.

Will Wimble

Spectator No. 108

Gratis anhelans, multa agendo nihil agens.[9]—PHÆDR.

AS I was yesterday morning walking with Sir Roger before his house, a country fellow brought him a huge fish, which, he told him, Mr. William Wimble had caught that very morning; and that he presented it with his service to him, and intended to come and dine with him. At the same time he delivered a letter, which my friend read to me as soon as the messenger left him.

Sir Roger,

I desire you to accept of a jack, which is the best I have caught this season. I intend to come and stay with you a week, and see how the perch bite in the Black River. I observed with some concern, the last time I saw you upon the bowling-green, that your whip wanted a lash to it; I will bring half a dozen with me that I twisted last week, which I hope will serve you all the time you are in the country. I have not been out of the saddle for six days last past, having been at Eton with Sir John's eldest son. He takes to his learning hugely.

I am, Sir, your humble servant,

Will Wimble.

This extraordinary letter, and message that accompanied it, made me very curious to know the character and quality of the

[9] Out of breath in vain, and very busy about nothing.

gentleman who sent them; which I found to be as follows. Will Wimble is younger brother to a baronet, and descended of the ancient family of the Wimbles. He is now between forty and fifty; but, being bred to no business and born to no estate, he generally lives with his elder brother as superintendent of his game. He hunts a pack of dogs better than any man in the country, and is very famous for finding out a hare. He is extremely well versed in all the little handicrafts of an idle man: he makes a May-fly to a miracle; and furnishes the whole country with angle-rods. As he is a good-natured, officious fellow, and very much esteemed upon account of his family, he is a welcome guest at every house, and keeps up a good correspondence among all the gentlemen about him. He carries a tulip root in his pocket from one to another, or exchanges a puppy between a couple of friends that live perhaps in the opposite sides of the county. Will is a particular favourite of all the young heirs, whom he frequently obliges with a net that he has weaved, or a setting-dog that he has made himself. He now and then presents a pair of garters of his own knitting to their mothers and sisters; and raises a great deal of mirth among them, by inquiring as often as he meets them how they wear. These gentleman-like manufactures and obliging little humours make Will the darling of the country.

Sir Roger was proceeding in the character of him, when he saw him make up to us with two or three hazel twigs in his hand that he had cut in Sir Roger's woods, as he came through them in his way to the house. I was very much pleased to observe on one side the hearty and sincere welcome with which Sir Roger received him, and on the other, the secret joy which his guest discovered at the sight of the good old knight. After the first salutes were over, Will desired Sir Roger to lend him one of his servants to carry a set of shuttlecocks he had with him in a little box, to a lady that lived about a mile off, to whom it seems he had promised such a present for above this

half-year. Sir Roger's back was no sooner turned, but honest Will began to tell me of a large cock pheasant that he had sprung in one of the neighbouring woods, with two or three other adventures of the same nature. Odd and uncommon characters are the game that I look for and most delight in; for which reason I was as much pleased with the novelty of the person that talked to me, as he could be for his life with the springing of a pheasant, and therefore listened to him with more than ordinary attention.

In the midst of his discourse the bell rang to dinner, where the gentleman I have been speaking of had the pleasure of seeing the huge jack he had caught served up for the first dish in a most sumptuous manner. Upon our sitting down to it he gave us a long account how he had hooked it, played with it, foiled it, and at length drew it out upon the bank, with several other particulars that lasted all the first course. A dish of wild fowl that came afterward furnished conversation for the rest of the dinner, which concluded with a late invention of Will's for improving the quail-pipe.

Upon withdrawing into my room after dinner, I was secretly touched with compassion towards the honest gentleman that had dined with us; and could not but consider with a great deal of concern, how so good a heart and such busy hands were wholly employed in trifles; that so much humanity should be so little beneficial to others, and so much industry so little advantageous to himself. The same temper of mind and application to affairs might have recommended him to the public esteem, and have raised his fortune in another station of life. What good to his country or himself might not a trader or merchant have done with such useful though ordinary qualifications?

Will Wimble's is the case of many a younger brother of a great family, who had rather see their children starve like gentlemen, than thrive in a trade or profession that is beneath their quality. This humour fills several parts of Europe with

pride and beggary. It is the happiness of a trading nation like ours, that the younger sons, though incapable of any liberal art or profession, may be placed in such a way of life as may perhaps enable them to vie with the best of their family. Accordingly we find several citizens that were launched into the world with narrow fortunes, rising by an honest industry to greater estates than those of their elder brothers. It is not improbable but Will was formerly tried at divinity, law, or physic, and that, finding his genius did not lie in that way, his parents gave him up at length to his own inventions. But certainly, however improper he might have been for studies of a higher nature, he was perfectly well turned for the occupations of trade and commerce. As I think this is a point which cannot be too much inculcated, I shall desire my reader to compare what I have here written with what I have said in my twenty-first speculation.

The Coverley Witch

Spectator No. 117

——*Ipsi sibi somnia fingunt.*[10]—VIRG.

THERE are some opinions in which a man should stand neuter, without engaging his assent to one side or the other. Such a hovering faith as this, which refuses to settle upon any determination, is absolutely necessary to a mind that is careful to avoid errors and prepossessions. When the arguments press equally on both sides in matters that are indifferent to us, the safest method is to give up ourselves to neither.

It is with this temper of mind that I consider the subject

[10] They fashion their dreams to their own purposes.

of witchcraft. When I hear the relations that are made from all parts of the world, not only from Norway and Lapland, from the East and West Indies, but from every particular nation in Europe, I cannot forbear thinking that there is such an intercourse and commerce with evil spirits as that which we express by the name of witchcraft. But when I consider that the ignorant and credulous parts of the world abound most in these relations, and that the persons among us who are supposed to engage in such an infernal commerce are people of a weak understanding and a crazed imagination, and at the same time reflect upon the many impostures and delusions of this nature that have been detected in all ages, I endeavour to suspend my belief till I hear more certain accounts than any which have yet come to my knowledge. In short, when I consider the question, whether there are such persons in the world as those we call witches, my mind is divided between the two opposite opinions; or rather (to speak my thoughts freely) I believe in general that there is, and has been, such a thing as witchcraft; but at the same time can give no credit to any particular instance of it.

I am engaged in this speculation by some occurrences that I met with yesterday, which I shall give my reader an account of at large. As I was walking with my friend Sir Roger by the side of one of his woods, an old woman applied herself to me for my charity. Her dress and figure put me in mind of the following description in Otway:

> In a close lane as I pursued my journey,
> I spied a wrinkled hag, with age grown double,
> Picking dry sticks, and mumbling to herself.
> Her eyes with scalding rheum were gall'd and red;
> Cold palsy shook her head; her hands seem'd wither'd;
> And on her crooked shoulders had she wrapp'd
> The tatter'd remnants of an old striped hanging,
> Which served to keep her carcase from the cold:
> So there was nothing of a piece about her.

> Her lower weeds were all o'er coarsely patch'd
> With diff'rent colour'd rags, black, red, white, yellow,
> And seem'd to speak variety of wretchedness.

As I was musing on this description, and comparing it with the object before me, the Knight told me that this very old woman had the reputation of a witch all over the country, that her lips were observed to be always in motion, and that there was not a switch about her house which her neighbours did not believe had carried her several hundreds of miles. If she chanced to stumble, they always found sticks or straws that lay in the figure of a cross before her. If she made any mistake at church, and cried Amen in a wrong place, they never failed to conclude that she was saying her prayers backwards. There was not a maid in the parish that would take a pin of her though she would offer a bag of money with it. She goes by the name of Moll White, and has made the country ring with several imaginary exploits which are palmed upon her. If the dairy maid does not make her butter come so soon as she should have it, Moll White is at the bottom of the churn. If a horse sweats in the stable, Moll White has been upon his back. If a hare makes an unexpected escape from the hounds, the huntsman curses Moll White. "Nay," says Sir Roger, "I have known the master of the pack, upon such an occasion, send one of his servants to see if Moll White had been out that morning."

This account raised my curiosity so far, that I begged my friend Sir Roger to go with me into her hovel, which stood in a solitary corner under the side of the wood. Upon our first entering Sir Roger winked to me, and pointed at something that stood behind the door, which, upon looking that way, I found to be an old broomstaff. At the same time he whispered me in the ear to take notice of a tabby cat that sat in the chimney corner, which, as the old Knight told me, lay under as bad a report as Moll White herself; for besides that Moll is said often to accompany her in the same shape, the cat is

reported to have spoken twice or thrice in her life, and to have played several pranks above the capacity of an ordinary cat.

I was secretly concerned to see human nature in so much wretchedness and disgrace, but at the same time could not forbear smiling to hear Sir Roger, who is a little puzzled about the old woman, advising her as a justice of peace to avoid all communication with the devil, and never to hurt any of her neighbours' cattle. We concluded our visit with a bounty, which was very acceptable.

In our return home, Sir Roger told me that old Moll had been often brought before him for making children spit pins, and giving maids the nightmare; and that the country people would be tossing her into a pond and trying experiments with her every day, if it was not for him and his chaplain.

I have since found upon inquiry that Sir Roger was several times staggered with the reports that had been brought him concerning this old woman, and would frequently have bound her over to the county sessions had not his chaplain with much ado persuaded him to the contrary.

I have been the more particular in this account, because I hear there is scarce a village in England that has not a Moll White in it. When an old woman begins to dote, and grow chargeable to a parish, she is generally turned into a witch, and fills the whole country with extravagant fancies, imaginary distempers and terrifying dreams. In the mean time, the poor wretch that is the innocent occasion of so many evils begins to be frighted at herself, and sometimes confesses secret commerce and familiarities that her imagination forms in a delirious old age. This frequently cuts off charity from the greatest objects of compassion, and inspires people with a malevolence towards these poor decrepit parts of our species in whom human nature is defaced by infirmity and dotage.

Johnson

Johnson

(1709-1784)

Samuel Johnson appears in the field of the periodical essay avowedly as a preacher and a reformer; "he had at length come forth," so Boswell tells us, "in the character for which he was eminently qualified, a majestic teacher of moral and religious wisdom." This is evidently not the most promising introduction for the familiar essayist, suggesting as it does that, of the two purposes recognized by the Queen Anne essayists,—to amuse and to instruct——one is in danger of being lost. However, it is not merely the fact that Johnson unduly emphasized a didactic aim that accounts for the imperfect success of his endeavor; perhaps a still worse fault is his characteristic style—a vocabulary abounding in Latin polysyllables and an elaborate balance of word and phrase. The stately manner is especially unsuitable for the more frivolous type of subject which in emulation of Addison he sometimes undertook. The present essay, however, suggests that occasionally a paper of this kind may offer a pleasantly humorous disproportion between matter and manner, between the trivial theme and the dignified language. Such a success is exceptional; on the whole, the personal essay requires a lighter hand than that of Samuel Johnson.

The Advantages of Living in a Garret

Rambler No. 117

> The gods they challenge, and affect the skies:
> Heaved on Olympus, tottering Ossa stood:
> On Ossa, Pelion nods with all his wood.—Pope.

NOTHING has more retarded the advancement of learning than the disposition of vulgar minds to ridicule and vilify what they cannot comprehend. All industry must be excited by hope; and as the student often proposes no other reward to

himself than praise, he is easily discouraged by contempt and insult. He who brings with him into a clamorous multitude the timidity of recluse speculation, and has never hardened his front in public life, or accustomed his passions to the vicissitudes and accidents, the triumphs and defeats of mixed conversation, will blush at the stare of petulant incredulity, and suffer himself to be driven by a burst of laughter from the fortresses of demonstration. The mechanist[1] will be afraid to assert before hardy contradiction the possibility of tearing down bulwarks with a silkworm's thread; and the astronomer of relating the rapidity of light, the distance of the fixed stars, and the height of the lunar mountains.

If I could by any efforts have shaken off this cowardice I had not sheltered myself under a borrowed name, nor applied to you for the means of communicating to the public the theory of a garret: a subject which, except some slight and transient strictures, has been hitherto neglected by those who were best qualified to adorn it, either for want of leisure to prosecute the various researches in which a nice discussion must engage them, or because it requires such diversity of knowledge, and such extent of curiosity, as is scarcely to be found in any single intellect; or perhaps others foresaw the tumults which would be raised against them, and confined their knowledge to their own breasts, and abandoned prejudice and folly to the direction of chance.

That the professors of literature generally reside in the highest stories has been immemorially observed. The wisdom of the ancients was well acquainted with the intellectual advantages of an elevated situation; why else were the Muses stationed on Olympus, or Parnassus, by those who could with equal right have raised them bowers in the vale of Tempe, or erected their altars among the flexures[2] of Meander? Why was Jove himself

[1] student of mechanics.
[2] windings.

nursed upon a mountain? Or why did the goddesses, when the prize of beauty was contested, try the cause upon the top of Ida? Such were the fictions by which the great masters of the earlier ages endeavoured to inculcate to posterity the importance of a garret, which, though they had been long obscured by the negligence and ignorance of succeeding times, were well enforced by the celebrated symbol of Pythagoras,

When the wind blows, worship its echo.

This could not but be understood by his disciples as an inviolable injunction to live in a garret, which I have found frequently visited by the echo and the wind. Nor was the tradition wholly obliterated in the age of Augustus, for Tibullus evidently congratulates himself upon his garret, not without some allusion to the Pythagorean precept:

Quam juvat immites ventos audire cubantem—
Aut, gelidas hibernus aquas cum fuderit auster,
Securum somnos, imbre juvante, sequi.

How sweet in sleep to pass the careless hours,
Lull'd by the beating winds and dashing showers.

And it is impossible not to discover the fondness of Lucretius, an earlier writer, for a garret, in his description of the lofty towers of serene learning, and of the pleasure with which a wise man looks down upon the confused and erratic state of the world moving below him:

Sed nil dulcius est, bene quam munita tenere
Edita doctrina sapientum templa serena;
Despicere unde queas alios, passimque videre
Errare, atque viam palanteis quaerere vitae.

'T is sweet thy labouring steps to guide
To virtue's heights, with wisdom well supplied,
And all the magazine of learning fortified:
From thence to look below on human kind,
Bewildered in the maze of life, and blind.—Dryden.

The institution has, indeed, continued to our own time; the garret is still the usual receptacle of the philosopher and poet; but this, like many ancient customs, is perpetuated only by an accidental imitation, without knowledge of the original reason for which it was established:

Causa latet: res est notissima.[3]
The cause is secret, but th' effect is known.—ADDISON.

Conjectures have, indeed, been advanced concerning these habitations of literature, but without much satisfaction to the judicious inquirer. Some have imagined that the garret is generally chosen by the wits as most easily rented; and concluded that no man rejoices in his aerial abode, but on the days of payment. Others suspect that a garret is chiefly convenient, as it is remoter than any other part of the house from the outer door, which is often observed to be infested by visitants, who talk incessantly of beer, or linen, or a coat, and repeat the same sounds every morning, and sometimes again in the afternoon, without any variation, except that they grow daily more importunate and clamorous, and raise their voices in time from mournful murmurs to raging vociferations. This eternal monotony is always detestable to a man whose chief pleasure is to enlarge his knowledge and vary his ideas. Others talk of freedom from noise, and abstraction from common business or amusements; and some, yet more visionary, tell us that the faculties are enlarged by open prospects, and that the fancy is more at liberty when the eye ranges without confinement.

These conveniences may perhaps all be found in a well-chosen garret; but surely they cannot be supposed sufficiently important to have operated invariably upon different climates, distant ages, and separate nations. Of a universal practice, there must still be presumed a universal cause, which, however recondite

[3] adapted from Ovid.

and abstruse, may be perhaps reserved to make me illustrious by its discovery, and you by its promulgation.

It is universally known that the faculties of the mind are invigorated or weakened by the state of the body, and that the body is in a great measure regulated by the various compressions of the ambient element. The effects of the air in the production or cure of corporeal maladies have been acknowledged from the time of Hippocrates; but no man has yet sufficiently considered how far it may influence the operations of the genius, though every day affords instances of local understanding, of wits and reasoners, whose faculties are adapted to some single spot, and who, when they are removed to any other place, sink at once into silence and stupidity. I have discovered, by a long series of observations, that invention and elocution suffer great impediments from dense and impure vapours, and that the tenuity of a defecated [4] air, at a proper distance from the surface of the earth, accelerates the fancy, and sets at liberty those intellectual powers which were before shackled by too strong attraction, and unable to expand themselves under the pressure of a gross atmosphere. I have found dulness to quicken into sentiment in a thin ether, as water, though not very hot, boils in a receiver partly exhausted; and heads, in appearance empty, have teemed with notions upon rising ground, as the flaccid sides of a football would have swelled out into stiffness and extension.

For this reason I never think myself qualified to judge decisively of any man's faculties whom I have only known in one degree of elevation; but take some opportunity of attending him from the cellar to the garret, and try upon him all the various degrees of rarefaction and condensation, tension and laxity. If he is neither vivacious aloft, nor serious below, I then consider him as hopeless; but as it seldom happens that I do not find the temper to which the texture of his brain is

[4] freed of impurities.

fitted, I accommodate him in time with a tube of mercury, first marking the point most favourable to his intellects, according to rules which I have long studied, and which I may, perhaps, reveal to mankind in a complete treatise of barometrical pneumatology.[5]

Another cause of the gaiety and sprightliness of the dwellers in garrets is probably the increase of that vertiginous motion, with which we are carried round by the diurnal revolution of the earth. The power of agitation upon the spirits is well known; every man has felt his heart lightened in a rapid vehicle, or on a galloping horse; and nothing is plainer, than that he who towers to the fifth story, is whirled through more space by every circumrotation than another that grovels upon the ground-floor. The nations between the tropics are known to be fiery, inconstant, inventive, and fanciful; because, living at the utmost length of the earth's diameter, they are carried about with more swiftness than those whom nature has placed nearer to the poles; and, therefore, as it becomes a wise man to struggle with the inconveniences of his country, we must actuate our languor by taking a few turns round the centre in a garret.

If you imagine that I ascribe to air and motion effects which they cannot produce, I desire you to consult your own memory, and consider whether you have never known a man acquire a reputation in his garret, which, when fortune or a patron had placed him upon the first floor, he was unable to maintain; and who never recovered his former vigour of understanding till he was restored to his original situation. That a garret will make every man a wit I am very far from supposing; I know there are some who would continue blockheads even on the summit of the Andes or on the peak of Teneriffe. But let not any man be considered as unimprovable till this potent remedy has been tried; for perhaps he was formed to be great only in

[5] science or doctrine of spirits.

a garret, as the joiner of Aretæus [6] was rational in no other place but in his own shop.

I think a frequent removal to various distances from the centre so necessary to a just estimate of intellectual abilities, and consequently of so great use in education, that if I hoped that the public could be persuaded to so expensive an experiment, I would propose that there should be a cavern dug, and a tower erected, like those which Bacon describes [7] in Solomon's house, for the expansion and concentration of understanding, according to the exigence of different employments, or constitutions. Perhaps some that fume away [8] in meditations upon time and space in the tower might compose tables of interest at a certain depth; and he that upon level ground stagnates in silence, or creeps in narrative, might, at the height of half a mile, ferment into merriment, sparkle with repartee, and froth with declamation.

Addison observes that we may find the heat of Virgil's climate in some lines of his Georgic; so when I read a composition I immediately determine the height of the author's habitation. As an elaborate performance is commonly said to smell of the lamp, my commendation of a noble thought, a sprightly sally, or a bold figure, is to pronounce it fresh from the garret; an expression which would break from me upon the persual of most of your papers, did I not believe that you sometimes quit the garret, and ascend into the cock-loft.[9]—HYPERTATUS.[10]

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[6] a Greek medical writer.
[7] in the *New Atlantis*.
[8] pass away like smoke.
[9] a small loft just under the ridge of the roof.
[10] literally, "at the very top."

Goldsmith

Goldsmith

(1728-1774)

"He left scarcely any kind of writing untouched, and he touched nothing which he did not adorn"—so runs the Latin epitaph which Johnson wrote for Oliver Goldsmith's monument in Westminster Abbey. Goldsmith is deservedly remembered as one of the most amazingly versatile of writers. Which work of Goldsmith's is best known to the general reader? *"The Vicar of Wakefield"* will be one answer; *"She Stoops to Conquer,"* another; *"The Deserted Village,"* a third. Goldsmith, that is to say, is thought of almost equally as novelist, as playwright, and as poet. He is also, however, an essayist, and this fourth phase of his work has received its due attention only within comparatively recent times. It is conceivable that the correction of this neglect has led to over-extravagant praise. Certainly, Professor Walker's dictum, "He has equalled Addison on Addison's own ground, and greatly excelled him elsewhere," would, not long ago, have been astounding.

Nevertheless Goldsmith clearly belongs in the inner circle of the essayists, and particularly in the fellowship of the most personal of them. He has a spiritual kinship with Steele, like him an impulsive and warm-hearted Irishman, and like him one whose writing fully reveals the man; and it is not too much to say that, among later essayists, it is Lamb with whom he has most in common. Goldsmith too can command the opposite extremes of farcical humor and deep tenderness; and his manner, far simpler and equally graceful, is as perfectly adapted to its subjects. He has, to be sure, no such portrait as Mrs. Battle in his gallery; nor, to keep within his own century, can it be said that Beau Tibbs withstands comparison with Sir Roger de Coverley. But the indirect self-portraiture of the "Man in Black," and the thoroughly self-revealing close of "Night in the City" are not easy to duplicate. When to this most vital of endowments for the familiar essayist are added Goldsmith's pleasant but keen satire, as in "National Prejudices," and his always pure and limpid style, it is evident that he is justly to be ranked as first among the essayists of his century.

National Prejudices

Citizen of the World No. 4

THE English seem as silent as the Japanese, yet vainer than the inhabitants of Siam. Upon my arrival I attributed that reserve to modesty, which I now find has its origin in pride. Condescend to address them first and you are sure of their acquaintance; stoop to flattery and you conciliate their friendship and esteem. They bear hunger, cold, fatigue, and all the miseries of life without shrinking; danger only calls forth their fortitude; they even exult in calamity: but contempt is what they cannot bear. An Englishman fears contempt more than death; he often flies to death as a refuge from its pressure, and dies when he fancies the world has ceased to esteem him.

Pride seems the source not only of their national vices, but of their national virtues also. An Englishman is taught to love the king as his friend, but to acknowledge no other master than the laws which himself has contributed to enact. He despises those nations who, that one may be free, are all content to be slaves; who first lift a tyrant into terror, and then shrink under his power as if delegated from Heaven. Liberty is echoed in all their assemblies; and thousands might be found ready to offer up their lives for the sound, though perhaps not one of all the number understands its meaning. The lowest mechanic, however, looks upon it as his duty to be a watchful guardian of his country's freedom, and often uses a language that might seem haughty even in the mouth of the great emperor who traces his ancestry to the moon.

A few days ago, passing by one of their prisons, I could not avoid stopping, in order to listen to a dialogue which I thought might afford me some entertainment. The conversation was carried on between a debtor through the grate of his prison, a porter, who had stopped to rest his burden, and a soldier at

the window. The subject was upon a threatened invasion from France, and each seemed extremely anxious to rescue his country from the impending danger. "For my part," cries the prisoner, "the greatest of my apprehension is for our freedom; if the French should conquer, what would become of English liberty? My dear friends, liberty is the Englishman's prerogative; we must preserve that at the expense of our lives; of that the French shall never deprive us. It is not to be expected that men who are slaves themselves would preserve our freedom should they happen to conquer." "Ay, slaves," cries the porter, "they are all slaves, fit only to carry burdens, every one of them. Before I would stoop to slavery let this be my poison" (and he held the goblet in his hand), "may this be my poison; but I would sooner list for a soldier."

The soldier, taking the goblet from his friend with much awe, fervently cried out, "It is not so much our liberties as our religion that would suffer by such a change: ay, our religion, my lads. May the devil sink me into flames" (such was the solemnity of his adjuration) "if the French should come over, but our religion would be utterly undone." So saying, instead of a libation, he applied the goblet to his lips, and confirmed his sentiments with a ceremony of the most persevering devotion.

In short, every man here pretends to be a politician; even the fair sex are sometimes found to mix the severity of national altercation with the blandishments of love, and often become conquerors by more weapons of destruction than their eyes.

This universal passion for politics is gratified by daily gazettes, as with us in China. But as in ours the emperor endeavours to instruct his people, in theirs the people endeavour to instruct the administration. You must not, however, imagine that they who compile these papers have any actual knowledge of the politics or the government of a state; they only collect their materials from the oracle of some coffee-house, which oracle has himself gathered them the night before from a beau at a gam-

ing-table, who has pillaged his knowledge from a great man's porter, who has had his information from the great man's gentleman, who has invented the whole story for his own amusement the night preceding.

The English, in general, seem fonder of gaining the esteem than the love of those they converse with. This gives a formality to their amusements; their gayest conversations have something too wise for innocent relaxation; though in company you are seldom disgusted with the absurdity of a fool, you are seldom lifted into rapture by those strokes of vivacity which give instant though not permanent pleasure.

What they want, however, in gaiety, they make up in politeness. You smile at hearing me praise the English for their politeness—you who have heard very different accounts from the missionaries at Pekin, who have seen such a different behaviour in their merchants and seamen at home. But I must still repeat it, the English seem more polite than any of their neighbours: their great art in this respect lies in endeavouring, while they oblige, to lessen the force of the favour. Other countries are fond of obliging a stranger, but seem desirous that he should be sensible of the obligation. The English confer their kindness with an appearance of indifference, and give away benefits with an air as if they despised them.

Walking, a few days ago, between an English and a French man, into the suburbs of the city, we were overtaken by a heavy shower of rain. I was unprepared; but they had each large coats, which defended them from what seemed to me a perfect inundation. The Englishman, seeing me shrink from the weather, accosted me thus: "Psha, man, what dost shrink at? Here, take this coat; I don't want it; I find it no way useful to me; I had as lief be without it." The Frenchman began to show his politeness in turn. "My dear friend," cries he, "why don't you oblige me by making use of my coat? you see how well it defends me from the rain; I should not choose to part with it to others,

but to such a friend as you I could even part with my skin to do him service."

From such minute instances as these, most reverend Fum Hoam, I am sensible your sagacity will collect instruction. The volume of nature is the book of knowledge; and he becomes most wise who makes the most judicious selection.—Farewell.

The Man in Black

Citizen of the World No. 26

THOUGH fond of my acquaintances, I desire an intimacy only with a few. The Man in Black, whom I have often mentioned, is one whose friendship I could wish to acquire, because he possesses my esteem. His manners, it is true, are tinctured with some strange inconsistencies; and he may be justly termed a humourist in a nation of humourists. Though he is generous even to profusion, he affects to be thought a prodigy of parsimony and prudence: though his conversation be replete with the most sordid and selfish maxims, his heart is dilated with the most unbounded love. I have known him profess himself a man-hater, while his cheek was glowing with compassion; and while his looks were softened into pity, I have heard him use the language of the most unbounded ill-nature. Some affect humanity and tenderness, others boast of having such dispositions from nature; but he is the only man I ever knew who seemed ashamed of his natural benevolence. He takes as much pains to hide his feelings as any hypocrite would to conceal his indifference; but on every unguarded moment the mask drops off, and reveals him to the most superficial observer.

In one of our late excursions into the country, happening to discourse upon the provision that was made for the poor in England, he seemed amazed how any of his countrymen could

be so foolishly weak as to relieve occasional objects of charity, when the laws had made such ample provision for their support. "In every parish-house," says he, "the poor are supplied with food, clothes, fire, and a bed to lie on; they want no more, I desire no more myself; yet still they seem discontented. I am surprised at the inactivity of our magistrates in not taking up such vagrants, who are only a weight upon the industrious; I am surprised that the people are found to relieve them, when they must be at the same time sensible that it in some measure encourages idleness, extravagance, and imposture. Were I to advise any man for whom I had the least regard, I would caution him by all means not to be imposed upon by their false pretences; let me assure you, sir, they are impostors, every one of them, and rather merit a prison than relief."

He was proceeding in this strain earnestly to dissuade me from an imprudence of which I am seldom guilty, when an old man, who still had about him the remnants of tattered finery, implored our compassion. He assured us he was no common beggar, but forced into the shameful profession to support a dying wife and five hungry children. Being prepossessed against such falsehoods, his story had not the least influence upon me; but it was quite otherwise with the Man in Black: I could see it visibly operate upon his countenance, and effectually interrupt his harangue. I could easily perceive that his heart burned to relieve the five starving children, but he seemed ashamed to discover his weakness to me. While he thus hesitated between compassion and pride, I pretended to look another way, and he seized this opportunity of giving the poor petitioner a piece of silver, bidding him at the same time, in order that I should hear, go work for his bread, and not tease passengers with such impertinent falsehoods for the future.

As he had fancied himself quite unperceived, he continued, as we proceeded, to rail against beggars with as much animosity as before: he threw in some episodes on his own amazing pru-

dence and economy, with his profound skill in discovering impostors; he explained the manner in which he would deal with beggars were he a magistrate, hinted at enlarging some of the prisons for their reception, and told two stories of ladies that were robbed by beggar-men. He was beginning a third to the same purpose, when a sailor with a wooden leg once more crossed our walks, desiring our pity, and blessing our limbs. I was for going on without taking any notice, but my friend, looking wistfully upon the poor petitioner, bid me stop, and he would show with how much ease he could at any time detect an impostor.

He now, therefore, assumed a look of importance, and in an angry tone began to examine the sailor, demanding in what engagement he was thus disabled and rendered unfit for service. The sailor replied, in a tone as angrily as he, that he had been an officer on board a private ship of war, and that he had lost his leg abroad in defence of those who did nothing at home. At this reply, all my friend's importance vanished in a moment; he had not a single question more to ask; he now only studied what method he should adopt to relieve him unobserved. He had, however, no easy part to act, as he was obliged to preserve the appearance of ill-nature before me, and yet relieve himself by relieving the sailor. Casting, therefore, a furious look upon some bundles of chips which the fellow carried in a string at his back, my friend demanded how he sold his matches; but, not waiting for a reply, desired, in a surly tone, to have a shilling's worth. The sailor seemed at first surprised at his demand, but soon recollecting himself, and presenting his whole bundle, "Here, master," says he, "take all my cargo, and a blessing into the bargain."

It is impossible to describe with what an air of triumph my friend marched off with his new purchase; he assured me that he was firmly of opinion that those fellows must have stolen their goods, who could thus afford to sell them for half value. He informed me of several different uses to which those chips

might be applied; he expatiated largely upon the savings that would result from lighting candles with a match, instead of thrusting them into the fire. He averred that he would as soon have parted with a tooth as his money to those vagabonds unless for some valuable consideration. I cannot tell how long this panegyric upon frugality and matches might have continued, had not his attention been called off by another object more distressing than either of the former. A woman in rags, with one child in her arms, and another on her back, was attempting to sing ballads, but with such a mournful voice that it was difficult to determine whether she was singing or crying. A wretch, who in the deepest distress still aimed at good-humour, was an object my friend was by no means capable of withstanding; his vivacity and his discourse were instantly interrupted; upon this occasion, his very dissimulation had forsaken him. Even in my presence he immediately applied his hands to his pockets, in order to relieve her: but guess his confusion when he found he had already given away all the money he carried about him to former objects. The misery painted in the woman's visage was not half so strongly expressed as the agony in his. He continued to search for some time, but to no purpose, till, at length recollecting himself, with a face of ineffable good-nature, as he had no money, he put into her hands his shilling's worth of matches.

Beau Tibbs

Citizen of the World No. 54

THOUGH naturally pensive, yet I am fond of gay company, and take every opportunity of thus dismissing the mind from duty. From this motive I am often found in the centre of a crowd; and wherever pleasure is to be sold, am always a purchaser. In those places, without being remarked by any, I

join in whatever goes forward, work my passions into a similitude of frivolous earnestness, shout as they shout, and condemn as they happen to disapprove. A mind thus sunk for a while below its natural standard is qualified for stronger flights, as those first retire who would spring forward with greater vigour.

Attracted by the serenity of the evening, my friend and I lately went to gaze upon the company in one of the public walks near the city. Here we sauntered together for some time, either praising the beauty of such as were handsome, or the dresses of such as had nothing else to recommend them. We had gone thus deliberately forward for some time, when stopping on a sudden, my friend caught me by the elbow, and led me out of the public walk; I could perceive by the quickness of his pace, and by his frequently looking behind, that he was attempting to avoid somebody who followed; we now turned to the right, then to the left; as we went forward he still went faster, but in vain; the person whom he attempted to escape hunted us through every doubling, and gained upon us each moment; so that at last we fairly stood still, resolving to face what we could not avoid.

Our pursuer soon came up, and joined us with all the familiarity of an old acquaintance. "My dear Drybone," cries he, shaking my friend's hand, "where have you been hiding this half a century? Positively I had fancied you were gone down to cultivate matrimony and your estate in the country." During the reply, I had an opportunity of surveying the appearance of our new companion: his hat was pinched up with peculiar smartness; his looks were pale, thin, and sharp; round his neck he wore a broad black ribbon, and in his bosom a buckle studded with glass; his coat was trimmed with tarnished twist; he wore by his side a sword with a black hilt, and his stockings of silk, though newly washed, were grown yellow by long service. I was so much engaged with the peculiarity of his dress that I attended only to the latter part of my friend's reply, in which he

complimented Mr. Tibbs on the taste of his clothes, and the bloom in his countenance: "Psha, psha, Will," cried the figure, "no more of that if you love me, you know I hate flattery, on my soul I do; and yet to be sure an intimacy with the great will improve one's appearance, and a course of venison will fatten; and yet faith I despise the great as much as you do; but there are a great many damn'd honest fellows among them; and we must not quarrel with one half, because the other wants weeding. If they were all such as my Lord Muddler, one of the most good-natured creatures that ever squeezed a lemon, I should myself be among the number of their admirers. I was yesterday to dine at the Duchess of Piccadilly's, my lord was there. 'Ned,' says he to me, 'Ned,' says he, 'I'll hold gold to silver I can tell where you were poaching last night.' 'Poaching, my lord,' says I; 'faith you have missed already; for I staid at home, and let the girls poach for me. That's my way; I take a fine woman as some animals do their prey; stand still, and swoop, they fall into my mouth.'"

"Ah, Tibbs, thou art an happy fellow," cried my companion, with looks of infinite pity, "I hope your fortune is as much improved as your understanding in such company?" "Improved," replied the other; "You shall know,—but let it go no further,—a great secret—five hundred a year to begin with.—My lord's word of honour for it—His lordship took me down in his own chariot yesterday, and we had a tete-a-tete dinner in the country; where we talked of nothing else." "I fancy you forget, sir," cried I, "you told us but this moment of your dining yesterday in town!" "Did I say so," replied he coolly, "to be sure if I said so it was so—dined in town; egad now I do remember, I did dine in town; but I dined in the country too; for you must know, my boys, I eat two dinners. By the bye, I am grown as nice as the devil in my eating. I'll tell you a pleasant affair about that: We were a select party of us to dine at Lady Grogram's, an affected piece, but let it go no

further; a secret: well, there happened to be no asafœtida in the sauce to a turkey, upon which, says I, I'll hold a thousand guineas, and say done first, that—But, dear Drybone, you are an honest creature, lend me half-a-crown for a minute or two, or so, just till—But hearkee, ask me for it the next time we meet, or it may be twenty to one but I forget to pay you."

When he left us, our conversation naturally turned upon so extraordinary a character. "His very dress," cries my friend, "is not less extraordinary than his conduct. If you meet him this day you find him in rags, if the next in embroidery. With those persons of distinction, of whom he talks so familiarly, he has scarcely a coffee-house acquaintance. However, both for the interests of society, and perhaps for his own, heaven has made him poor, and while all the world perceive his wants, he fancies them concealed from every eye. An agreeable companion because he understands flattery, and all must be pleased with the first part of his conversation, though all are sure of its ending with a demand on their purse. While his youth countenances the levity of his conduct, he may thus earn a precarious subsistence, but when age comes on, the gravity of which is incompatible with buffoonery, then will he find himself forsaken by all. Condemned in the decline of life to hang upon some rich family whom he once despised, there to undergo all the ingenuity of studied contempt, to be employed only as a spy upon the servants, or a bugbear to frighten the children into obedience." Adieu.

Night in the City

Citizen of the World No. 117

THE clock just struck two, the expiring taper rises and sinks in the socket, the watchman forgets the hour in slumber, the laborious and the happy are at rest, and nothing

wakes but meditation, guilt, revelry, and despair. The drunkard once more fills the destroying bowl, the robber walks his midnight round, and the suicide lifts his guilty arm against his own sacred person.

Let me no longer waste the night over the page of antiquity, or the sallies of contemporary genius, but pursue the solitary walk, where vanity, ever changing, but a few hours past walked before me; where she kept up the pageant, and now, like a froward child, seems hushed with her own importunities.

What a gloom hangs all around! The dying lamp feebly emits a yellow gleam; no sound is heard but of the chiming clock, or the distant watch-dog. All the bustle of human pride is forgotten; an hour like this may well display the emptiness of human vanity.

There will come a time when this temporary solitude may be made continual, and the city itself, like its inhabitants, fade away, and leave a desert in its room.

What cities as great as this have once triumphed in existence, had their victories as great, joy as just, and as unbounded; and, with short-sighted presumption, promised themselves immortality! Posterity can hardly trace the situation of some; the sorrowful traveller wanders over the awful ruins of others; and, as he beholds, he learns wisdom, and feels the transience of every sublunary possession.

"Here," he cries, "stood their citadel, now grown over with weeds; there their senate house, but now the haunt of every noxious reptile; temples and theatres stood here, now only an undistinguished heap of ruin. They are fallen, for luxury and avarice first made them feeble. The rewards of the state were conferred on amusing and not on useful members of society. Their riches and opulence invited the invaders, who, though at first repulsed, returned again, conquered by perseverance, and at last swept the defendants into undistinguished destruction."

How few appear in those streets which but some few hours

ago were crowded! and those who appear now no longer wear their daily mask, nor attempt to hide their lewdness or their misery.

But who are those who make the streets their couch, and find a short repose from wretchedness at the doors of the opulent? These are strangers, wanderers, and orphans, whose circumstances are too humble to expect redress, and whose distresses are too great even for pity. Their wretchedness excites rather horror than pity. Some are without the covering even of rags, and others emaciated with disease; the world has disclaimed them; society turns its back upon their distress, and has given them up to nakedness and hunger. These poor shivering females have once seen happier days, and been flattered into beauty. They have been prostituted to the gay luxurious villain, and are now turned out to meet the severity of winter. Perhaps, now lying at the doors of their betrayers, they sue to wretches whose hearts are insensible, to debauchees who may curse, but will not relieve them.

Why, why was I born a man, and yet see the sufferings of wretches I cannot relieve? Poor houseless creatures! the world will give you reproaches, but will not give you relief. The slightest misfortunes of the great, the most imaginary uneasiness of the rich, are aggravated with all the power of eloquence, and held up to engage our attention and sympathetic sorrow. The poor weep unheeded, persecuted by every subordinate species of tyranny; and every law which gives others security becomes an enemy to them.

Why was this heart of mine formed with so much sensibility? or why was not my fortune adapted to its impulse? Tenderness, without a capacity of relieving, only makes the man who feels it more wretched than the object which sues for assistance.—Adieu.

Hunt

Hunt

(1784-1859)

THE LIFE AND WORK of Leigh Hunt serve to link two phases of the essay and, in another sense, two generations of writers: his writing suggests a transition from the periodical essay of the eighteenth century to the new magazine essay of the nineteenth; and his long lifetime makes it possible for him to be both the contemporary and associate of Lamb and Hazlitt, of Shelley, Keats, and Byron, and also the friend of the Victorian poets and novelists, of Browning and Tennyson, Dickens and Thackeray. It perhaps should be added that Hunt, in all his long career, seldom cut a really impressive figure. The figure of Harold Skimpole, in Dickens' *Bleak House*, is his all too faithful caricature. When not actually sneered at, he was likely to be patronized and tolerated. There is a similar lack of impressiveness about his work. His more ambitious projects have been forgotten; except for a very few essays, "Abou Ben Adhem" and "Jenny Kissed Me" are all that are really well known. Yet the little of Hunt that has truly survived seems enough to ensure a minor immortality for him. He is, after all, a true book lover, and he can communicate his literary enthusiasms to the reader in a most pleasant and confidential manner. "Confidential" perhaps suggests what the reader may feel to be his worst fault; the chatty manner too readily declines into the tiresomely trivial, and sentiment, as always, may lapse into sentimentality. The best of Hunt's essays, however, escape these charges. One at least, "Deaths of Little Children," —which Lamb, it is not surprising to learn, highly admired—must be felt to be thoroughly fine, and genuinely moving. For the rest, there will surely continue to be a place for these cheery and graceful sketches; they seem likely, indeed, to be remembered when many more weighty things have passed into oblivion.

On the Graces and Anxieties of Pig-Driving

FROM the perusal of this article we beg leave to warn off vulgar readers of all denominations, whether of the "great

vulgar or the small."[1] Warn, did we say? We drive them off; for Horace tells us that they, as well as pigs, are to be so treated. *Odi profanum vulgus,* says he, *et arceo.* But do thou lend thine ear, gentle shade of Goldsmith, who didst make thy bear-leader denounce "everything as is low";[2] and thou, Steele, who didst humanize upon public-houses and puppet-shows; and Fielding, thou whom the great Richardson, less in that matter (and some others) than thyself, did accuse of vulgarity, because thou didst discern natural gentility in a footman, and yet was not to be taken in by the airs of Pamela and my Lady G.

The title is a little startling; but "style and sentiment," as a lady said, "can do anything." Remember, then, gentle reader, that talents are not to be despised in the humblest walks of life; we will add, nor in the muddiest. The other day we happened to be among a set of spectators who could not help stopping to admire the patience and address with which a pig-driver huddled and cherished onward his drove of unaccommodating *élèves,*[3] down a street in the suburbs. He was a born genius for a maneuver. Had he originated in a higher sphere he would have been a general, or a stage-manager, or, at least, the head of a set of monks. Conflicting interests were his forte; pig-headed wills, and proceedings hopeless. To see the *hand* with which he did it! How hovering, yet firm; how encouraging, yet compelling; how indicative of the space on each side of him, and yet of the line before him; how general, how particular, how perfect! No barber's could quiver about a head with more lightness of apprehension; no cook's pat up and proportion the side of a pasty with a more final eye. The whales, quoth old Chapman, speaking of Neptune,

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[1] from Cowley's translation of the line of Horace, *Odi profanum vulgus, et arceo:*
Hence, ye profane, I hate you all;
Both the great vulgar, and the small.

[2] cf. *She Stoops to Conquer,* I, 2.

[3] pupils.

The whales exulted under him, and knew their mighty king.[4]

The pigs did not exult, but they knew their king. Unwilling was their subjection, but "more in sorrow than in anger." They were too far gone for rage. Their case was hopeless. They did not see why they should proceed, but they felt themselves bound to do so; forced, conglomerated, crowded onwards, irresistibly impelled by fate and Jenkins. Often would they have bolted under any other master. They squeaked and grunted as in ordinary; they sidled, they shuffled, they half stopped; they turned an eye to all the little outlets of escape; but in vain. There they stuck (for their very progress was a sort of sticking), charmed into the center of his sphere of action, laying their heads together, but to no purpose; looking all as if they were shrugging their shoulders, and eschewing the tip-end of the whip of office. Much eye had they to their left leg; shrewd backward glances; not a little anticipative squeak and sudden rush of avoidance. It was a superfluous clutter, and they felt it; but a pig finds it more difficult than any other animal to accommodate himself to circumstances. Being out of his pale, he is in the highest state of wonderment and inaptitude. He is sluggish, obstinate, opinionate, not very social; has no desire of seeing foreign parts. Think of him in a multitude, forced to travel, and wondering what the devil it is that drives him! Judge by this of the talents of his driver.

We beheld a man once, an inferior genius, inducting a pig into the other end of Long Lane, Smithfield. He had got him thus far towards the market. It was much. His air announced success in nine parts out of ten, and hope for the remainder. It had been a happy morning's work; he had only to look for the termination of it; and he looked (as a critic of an exalted turn of mind would say) in brightness and in joy. Then would he go to the public-house, and indulge in porter and a pleasing security. Perhaps

[4] from Chapman's translation of the *Iliad*.

he would not say much at first, being oppressed with the greatness of his success; but by degrees, especially if interrogated, he would open, like Æneas, into all the circumstances of his journey and the perils that beset him. Profound would be his set-out; full of tremor his middle course; high and skillful his progress; glorious, though with a quickened pulse, his triumphant entry. Delicate had been his situation in Ducking Pond Row; masterly his turn at Bell Alley. We saw him with the radiance of some such thought on his countenance. He was just entering Long Lane. A gravity came upon him, as he steered his touchy convoy into this his last thoroughfare. A dog moved him into a little agitation, darting along; but he resumed his course, not without a happy trepidation, hovering as he was on the borders of triumph. The pig still required care. It was evidently a pig with all the peculiar turn of mind of his species; a fellow that would not move faster than he could help; irritable, retrospective; picking objections, and prone to boggle; a chap with a tendency to take every path but the proper one, and with a sidelong tact for the alleys.

He bolts!

He's off!—*Evasit! erupit!* [5]

"Oh," exclaimed the man, dashing his hand against his head, lifting his knee in agony, and screaming with all the weight of a prophecy which the spectators felt to be too true—"*He'll go up all manner of streets!*"

Poor fellow! We think of him now sometimes, driving up Duke Street, and not to be comforted in Barbican.

Spring and Daisies

SPRING, while we are writing, is complete. The winds have done their work. The shaken air, well tempered and equal-

[5] He has stolen away! He has escaped!—words used of Catiline by Cicero.

ized, has subsided; the genial rains, however thickly they may come, do not saturate the ground beyond the power of the sun to dry it up again. There are clear crystal mornings; noons of blue sky and white cloud; nights, in which the growing moon seems to lie looking at the stars, like a young shepherdess at her flock. A few days ago she lay gazing in this manner at the solitary evening star, like Diana, on the slope of a valley, looking up at Endymion.[6] His young eye seemed to sparkle out upon the world; while she, bending inwards, her hands behind her head, watched him with an enamoured dumbness.

But this is the quiet of Spring. Its voices and swift movements have come back also. The swallow shoots by us, like an embodied ardor of the season. The glowing bee has his will of the honeyed flowers, grappling with them as they tremble. We have not yet heard the nightingale or the cuckoo; but we can hear them with our imagination, and enjoy them through the content of those who have.

Then the young green. This is the most apt and perfect mark of the season—the true issuing forth of the Spring. The trees and bushes are putting forth their crisp fans; the lilac is loaded with bud; the meadows are thick with the bright young grass, running into sweeps of white and gold with the daisies and butter-cups. The orchards announce their riches, in a shower of silver blossoms. The earth in fertile woods is spread with yellow and blue carpets of primroses, violets, and hyacinths, over which the birch-trees, like stooping nymphs, hang with their thickening hair. Lilies-of-the-valley, stocks, columbines, lady-smocks, and the intensely red peony which seems to anticipate the full glow of summer-time, all come out to wait upon the season, like fairies from their subterraneous palaces.

Who is to wonder that the idea of love mingles itself with that of this cheerful and kind time of the year, setting aside

[6] the youth beloved of the moon-goddess.

even common associations? It is not only its youth, and beauty, and budding life, and "the passion of the groves," that exclaim with the poet:

> Let those love now, who never loved before;
> And those who always loved, now love the more.[7]

All our kindly impulses are apt to have more sentiment in them than the world suspects; and it is by fetching out this sentiment, and making it the ruling association, that we exalt the impulse into generosity and refinement, instead of degrading it, as is too much the case, into what is selfish and coarse, and pollutes all our systems. One of the greatest inspirers of love is gratitude—not merely on its common grounds, but gratitude for pleasures, whether consciously or unconsciously conferred. Thus we are thankful for the delight given us by a kind and sincere face; and if we fall in love with it, one great reason is, that we long to return what we have received. The same feeling has a considerable influence in the love that has been felt for men of talents, whose persons or address have not been much calculated to inspire it. In spring-time joy awakens the heart; with joy awakes gratitude and nature; and in our gratitude we return, on its own principle of participation, the love that has been shown us.

This association of ideas renders solitude in spring, and solitude in winter, two very different things. In the latter, we are better content to bear the feelings of the season by ourselves; in the former, they are so sweet, as well as so overflowing, that we long to share them. Shakespeare, in one of his sonnets, describes himself as so identifying the beauties of the Spring with the thought of his absent mistress, that he says he forgot them in their own character, and played with them only as her shadow. See how exquisitely he turns a commonplace into this fancy;

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[7] from Parnell's translation of the opening of *Pervigilium Veneris*.

and what a noble, brief portrait of April he gives us at the beginning. There is indeed a wonderful mixture of softness and strength in almost every one of the lines:

> From you have I been absent in the spring,
> When proud-pied April, dressed in all his trim,
> Hath put a spirit of youth in everything;
> That heavy Saturn laughed and leaped with him.
> Yet not the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
> Of different flowers in odor and in hue,
> Could make me any summer's story tell,
> Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew:
> Nor did I wonder at the lilies white,
> Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose:
> They were but sweet, but patterns of delight,
> Drawn after you, you pattern of all those.
> Yet seemed it winter still; and, you away,
> As with your shadow I with these did play.[8]

Shakespeare was fond of alluding to April. He did not allow May to have all his regard, because she was richer. Perdita, crowned with flowers, in the *Winter's Tale*, is beautifully compared to

> Flora,
> Peering in April's front.

There is a line in one of his sonnets, which, agreeably to the image he had in his mind, seems to strike up in one's face, hot and odorous, like perfume in a censer.

> In process of the seasons have I seen
> Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burned.[9]

His allusions to Spring are numerous in proportion. We all know the song containing that fine line, fresh from the most brilliant of pallettes:—

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[8] Sonnet 98.
[9] Sonnet 104.

When daisies pied, and violets blue,
And lady-smocks all silver white,
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue,
Do paint the meadows with delight.[10]

We owe a long debt of gratitude to the daisy; and we take this opportunity of discharging a millionth part of it. If we undertook to pay it all, we should have had to write such a book as is never very likely to be written—a journal of numberless happy hours in childhood, kept with the feelings of an infant and the pen of a man. For it would take, we suspect, a depth of delight and a subtlety of words to express even the vague joy of infancy, such as our learned departures from natural wisdom would find it more difficult to put together, than criticism and comfort, or an old palate and a young relish. But knowledge is the widening and the brightening road that must conduct us back to the joys from which it led us, and which it is destined perhaps to secure and extend. We must not quarrel with its asperities, when we can help.

We do not know the Greek name of the daisy, nor do the dictionaries inform us; and we are not at present in the way of consulting books that might. We always like to see what the Greeks say to these things, because they had a sentiment in their enjoyments. The Latins called the daisy *Bellis* or *Bellus*, as much as to say Nice One. With the French and Italians it has the same name as a Pearl—Marguerite, Margarita, or, by way of endearment, Margheretina. The same word was the name of a woman, and occasioned infinite intermixtures of compliment about pearls, daisies, and fair mistresses. Chaucer, in his beautiful poem of *The Flower and the Leaf*,[11] which is evidently imitated from some French poetess, says:

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[10] from *Love's Labour's Lost*, V, 2.
[11] now no longer attributed to Chaucer.

And at the laste there began anon
A lady for to sing right womanly
A bargaret in praising the daisie,
For as me thought among her notes sweet,
She said, *"Si douset est la Margarete."*

"The Margaret is so sweet." Our Margaret, however, in this allegorical poem, is undervalued in comparison with the laurel; yet Chaucer perhaps was partly induced to translate it on account of its making the figure that it does; for he has informed us more than once, in a very particular manner, that it was his favorite flower. He says that he finds it ever new, and that he shall love it till his "heart dies"; and afterwards, with a natural picture of his resting on the grass,

Adown full softeley I gan to sink,
And leaning on my elbow and my side,
The long day I shope me for to abide
For nothing else, and I shall not lie,
But for to look upon the daisie;
That well by reason men it calle may
The daisie, or else the eye of day.[12]

This etymology, which we have no doubt is the real one, is repeated by Ben Jonson, who takes occasion to spell the word "days-eyes," adding, with his usual tendency to overdo a matter of learning,

Days-eyes, and lippes of cows,—[13]

videlicet, cowslips: which is a disentanglement of compounds, in the style of our pleasant parodists—

Puddings of the plum,
And fingers of the lady.

[12] from the *Prologue to the Legend of Good Women.*
[13] from Jonson's masque, *Pan's Anniversary.*

Mr. Wordsworth introduces his homage to the daisy with a passage from George Wither; which, as it is an old favorite of ours, and extremely applicable both to this article and our whole work, we cannot deny ourselves the pleasure of repeating. It is the more interesting, inasmuch as it was written in prison, where the freedom of the author's opinions had thrown him. He is speaking of his Muse, or Imagination.

> Her divine skill taught me this,
> That from everything I saw
> I could some instruction draw,
> And raise pleasure to the height
> From the meanest object's sight.
> By the murmur of a spring,
> Or the least bough's rustelling;
> By a daisy, whose leaves spread
> Shut, when Titan goes to bed;
> Or a shady bush or tree;
> She could more infuse in me,
> Than all Nature's beauties can
> In some other wiser man.[14]

Mr. Wordsworth undertakes to patronize the Celandine, because nobody else will notice it; which is a good reason. But though he tells us, in a startling piece of information, that

> Poets, vain men in their mood,
> Travel with the multitude,[15]

yet he falls in with his old brethren of England and Normandy, and becomes loyal to the daisy.

Mr. Wordsworth calls the daisy "an unassuming commonplace of Nature," which it is; and he praises it very becomingly for discharging its duties so cheerfully, in that universal character. But we cannot agree with him in thinking that it has a "homely

[14] Wordsworth uses this passage from Wither as a preface to his poem "The Daisy."
[15] from "To a Small Celandine."

face." Not that we should care if it had; for homeliness does not make ugliness; but we appeal to everybody, whether it is proper to say this of *la belle Marguerite*. In the first place, its shape is very pretty and slender, but not too much so. Then it has a boss of gold, set round and irradiated with silver points. Its yellow and fair white are in so high a taste of contrast, that Spenser has chosen the same colors for a picture of Leda reposing:

> Oh wondrous skill and sweet wit of the man!
> That her in daffodillies sleeping laid
> From scorching heat her dainty limbs to shade.[16]

It is for the same reason that the daisy, being chiefly white, makes such a beautiful show in company with the buttercup. But this is not all; for look at the back,[17] and you find its fair petals blushing with a most delightful red. And how compactly and delicately is the neck set in green! *Belle et douce Marguerite, aimable sœur du roi Kingcup,*[18] we would tilt for thee with a hundred pens, against the stoutest poet that did not find perfection in thy cheek.

But here somebody may remind us of the spring showers, and what drawbacks they are upon going into the fields.—Not at all so, when the spring is really confirmed, and the showers but April-like and at intervals. Let us turn our imaginations to the bright side of spring, and we shall forget the showers. You see they have been forgotten just this moment. Besides, we are not likely to stray too far into the fields; and if we should, are there not hats, bonnets, barns, cottages, elm-trees, and good wills? We may make these things zests, if we please, instead of drawbacks.

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[16] from the *Faery Queen*, Book III, canto II.
[17] It is of course the English, not the American daisy to which Hunt refers.
[18] Fair and sweet Daisy, kind sister of King Buttercup.

The Nightingale

BUT a more wonderful bird comes in April than the swallow—the nightingale. How different from the other! He all so public, so restless, and so given up to his body; this all so hidden, so stationary, so full of soul! We hear him to singular advantage where we live. I verily believe that ours is the last house, near the metropolis, to the garden of which he comes. It is an old practice of mine, taught me by my father, who was a studious cultivator of what he called "nature's medicine," to open one of my chamber windows with the dawn of light, and so let in upon my last slumbers the virgin breath of the morning. Never shall I forget the first time I heard the nightingale in company with the dear creature who is the delight of my life. The tears come into my eyes to think of it. Is this from effeminacy? from weakness? Oh, God, no! It is from that secret sense we feel in us of the power of man to perceive and appreciate the wonderful beauty of the universe, mingled with an unconscious regret of our mortality—of the weakness and shortness of our being, compared with the strength of our affections. But far was a tear from my eyes at the time. The fullness of the sweet burthen of beauty was on us, without the weight. Harriet heard the nightingale first. "Hark!" said she. The sound was not to be mistaken. It was one of those passages of his song, not the finest, but still exquisite and peculiar, in which he chucks out a series of his duller notes, as if for the pleasure of showing how rich he is in the common coin of his art, as well as in the more precious. I rose and opened the window. The most divine of all sounds rewarded us—that low, long-drawn, internal, liquid *line of a note*, the deepest and sweetest ever heard, for which it seems as if the bird resorted to the innermost core of his soul, and meditated as he drew it along, over I know not what celestial darkness of delight. It is the meeting with the extreme of pleasure—with the gratitude which melancholy only can express.

The sound mingled with our waking dreams, and heaven and earth seemed to enfold us in their blessing.

Mr. Coleridge, in one of those sallies of his genius, in which he has so often startled and instructed one's commonplaces, informed the world some time ago that it was wrong to designate the nightingale by the title "melancholy," there being "in nature nothing melancholy": and the song of the bird being full of quick, hurried, and lively notes, anything but sorrowful; in short, he concluded, we ought to say, not the melancholy, but the "merry nightingale."

I regret that I have not his beautiful lines by me to quote.

The critics, at Mr. Coleridge's direction, inquired into this matter, and pronounced him in the right; and it is now the fashion to say that the talk of the melancholy of the nightingale is an error, and that he is a very gay, laughing, merry fellow, who happens to be out of the doors at night like other merry fellows, and is not a whit more given to pensiveness.

Nevertheless, with submission, I think that the new notion is wrong, and that the nightingale of Milton,

> Most musical, most melancholy,

is still the real nightingale, and that the old opinion will prevail. Not that the bird is sorrowful, as the ancient legend supposed, though many of his notes, especially considering the pauses between them, which give them an air of reflection, can never be considered as expressing pleasure by means of gaiety, much less mirth. There is no levity in the nightingale. We know not what complication of feelings may be mixed up in the mystery of his song; but we take it for granted, and allow that, upon the whole, it expresses a very great degree of pleasure. I grant that to the full. But the truth is, that this pleasure, being not only mixed up with an extreme of gravity, as I have just been showing, but bringing with it an idea of loneliness, and coming at night-time, when the condition of the whole universe disposes us

to meditation, the very pleasure, by the contrast, forces us more strongly upon the greater idea of the two; and hence the effect of the nightingale's song has been justly pronounced to be melancholy. It may be allowed to Mr. Coleridge, that in some very energetic and comprehensive and final sense of the assertion, there is "nothing melancholy in nature," although to our limited faculties there may seem to be enough of it to contend with, as the world goes; but upon the same principle, melancholy itself is not melancholy, and so we come round again to the natural opinion. Shakespeare has made one of his characters in *The Merchant of Venice* account partly for the reason why music generally speaking, produces a serious impression—

"I'm never merry" (says Jessica to Lorenzo) "when I hear sweet music."
"The reason is" (says her lover) "your spirits are attentive.
For do but note a wild and wanton herd,
Or race of youthful and unhandled colts,
Fetching mad bounds, bellowing and neighing loud,
Which is the hot condition of their blood:—
If they but hear perchance a trumpet sound,
Or an air of music catch their ears,
You shall perceive them make a mutual stand,
Their savage eyes turn'd to a modest gaze
By the sweet power of music."

And such, no doubt, is partly the case with all creatures capable of attending to musical sounds. But with the human being the consciousness is mixed up with a thousand unconscious feelings to the effect already mentioned. There falls upon them a shadow of the great mystery of the universe. If a party of glee-singers were to become aware of a nightingale singing near them at one o'clock in the morning, and upon a pause in his song, were to strike up a jovial catch by way of answer, they would be thought in bad taste, and a parcel of simpletons. The feeling, in any real lover of music, would be serious—voluptuous, if you

please, and enchanting, but still full of the gravity of voluptuousness—serious from its very pleasure.

Deaths of Little Children

A GRECIAN philosopher being asked why he wept for the death of his son, since the sorrow was in vain, replied, "I weep on that account." And his answer became his wisdom. It is only for sophists to contend that we, whose eyes contain the fountains of tears, need never give way to them. It would be unwise not to do so on some occasions. Sorrow unlocks them in her balmy moods. The first bursts may be bitter and overwhelming; but the soil on which they pour would be worse without them. They refresh the fever of the soul—the dry misery which parches the countenance into furrows, and renders us liable to our most terrible "flesh-quakes."

There are sorrows, it is true, so great, that to give them some of the ordinary vents is to run a hazard of being overthrown. These we must rather strengthen ourselves to resist, or bow quietly and drily down, in order to let them pass over us, as the traveller does the wind of the desert. But where we feel that tears would relieve us, it is false philosophy to deny ourselves at least that first refreshment; and it is always false consolation to tell people that because they cannot help a thing, they are not to mind it. The true way is, to let them grapple with the unavoidable sorrow, and try to win it into gentleness by a reasonable yielding. There are griefs so gentle in their very nature that it would be worse than false heroism to refuse them a tear. Of this kind are the deaths of infants. Particular circumstances may render it more or less advisable to indulge in grief for the loss of a little child; but, in general, parents should be no more advised to repress their first tears on such an occasion, than to repress their smiles towards a child surviving, or

to indulge in any other sympathy. It is an appeal to the same gentle tenderness; and such appeals are never made in vain. The end of them is an acquittal from the harsher bonds of affection—from the tying down of the spirit to one melancholy idea.

It is the nature of tears of this kind, however strongly they may gush forth, to run into quiet waters at last. We cannot easily, for the whole course of our lives, think with pain of any good and kind person whom we have lost. It is the divine nature of their qualities to conquer pain and death itself; to turn the memory of them into pleasure; to survive with a placid aspect in our imaginations. We are writing at this moment just opposite a spot which contains the grave of one[19] inexpressibly dear to us. We see from our windows the trees about it, and the church spire. The green fields lie around. The clouds are travelling overhead, alternately taking away the sunshine and restoring it. The vernal winds, piping of the flowery summertime, are nevertheless calling to mind the far-distant and dangerous ocean, which the heart that lies in that grave had many reasons to think of. And yet the sight of this spot does not give us pain. So far from it, it is the existence of that grave which doubles every charm of the spot; which links the pleasures of our childhood and manhood together; which puts a hushing tenderness in the winds and a patient joy upon the landscape, which seems to unite heaven and earth, mortality and immortality, the grass of the tomb and the grass of the green field; and gives a more maternal aspect to the whole kindness of Nature. It does not hinder gaiety itself. Happiness was what its tenant, through all her troubles, would have diffused. To diffuse happiness, and to enjoy it, is not only carrying on her wishes, but realizing her hopes; and gaiety, freed from its only pollutions, malignity and want of sympathy, is but a child playing about the knees of its mother.

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[19] The grave of his mother.

The remembered innocence and endearments of a child stand us instead of virtues that have died older. Children have not exercised the voluntary offices of friendship; they have not chosen to be kind and good to us; nor stood by us, from conscious will, in the hour of adversity. But they have shared their pleasures and pains with us as well as they could; the interchange of good offices between us has, of necessity, been less mingled with the troubles of the world; the sorrow arising from their death is the only one which we can associate with their memories. These are happy thoughts that cannot die. Our loss may always render them pensive; but they will not always be painful. It is a part of the benignity of Nature that pain does not survive like pleasure, at any time, much less where the cause of it is an innocent one. The smile will remain reflected by memory, as the moon reflects the light upon us when the sun has gone into heaven.

When writers like ourselves quarrel with earthly pain (we mean writers of the same intentions, without implying, of course, anything about abilities or otherwise), they are misunderstood if they are supposed to quarrel with pains of every sort. This would be idle and effeminate. They do not pretend, indeed, that humanity might not wish, if it could, to be entirely free from pain; for it endeavours, at all times, to turn pain into pleasure; or at least to set off the one with the other, to make the former a zest and the latter a refreshment. The most unaffected dignity of suffering does this, and, if wise, acknowledges it. The greatest benevolence towards others, the most unselfish relish of their pleasures, even at its own expense, does but look to increasing the general stock of happiness, though content, if it could, to have its identity swallowed up in that splendid contemplation. We are far from meaning that this is to be called selfishness. We are far, indeed, from thinking so, or of so confounding words. But neither is it to be called pain when most unselfish, if disinterestedness be truly understood. The

pain that is in it softens into pleasure, as the darker hue of the rainbow melts into the brighter. Yet even if a harsher line is to be drawn between the pain and pleasure of the most unselfish mind (and ill-health, for instance, may draw it), we should not quarrel with it if it contributed to the general mass of comfort, and were of a nature which general kindliness could not avoid. Made as we are, there are certain pains without which it would be difficult to conceive certain great and overbalancing pleasures. We may conceive it possible for beings to be made entirely happy; but in our composition something of pain seems to be a necessary ingredient, in order that the materials may turn to as fine account as possible, though our clay, in the course of ages and experience, may be refined more and more. We may get rid of the worst earth, though not of earth itself.

Now, the liability to the loss of children—or rather what renders us sensible of it, the occasional loss itself—seems to be one of these necessary bitters thrown into the cup of humanity. We do not mean that every one must lose one of his children in order to enjoy the rest, or that every individual loss afflicts us in the same proportion. We allude to the deaths of infants in general. These might be as few as we could render them. But if none at all ever took place, we should regard every little child as a man or a woman secured; and it will easily be conceived what a world of endearing cares and hopes this security would endanger. The very idea of infancy would lose its continuity with us. Girls and boys would be future men and women, not present children. They would have attained their full growth in our imaginations, and might as well have been men and women at once. On the other hand, those who have lost an infant, are never, as it were, without an infant child. They are the only persons who, in one sense, retain it always, and they furnish their neighbours with the same idea. The other children grow up to manhood and womanhood, and suffer all the changes

of mortality. This one alone is rendered an immortal child. Death has arrested it with his kindly harshness, and blessed it into an eternal image of youth and innocence.

Of such as these are the pleasantest shapes that visit our fancy and our hopes. They are the ever-smiling emblems of joy, the prettiest pages that wait upon imagination. Lastly, "Of these is the kingdom of heaven." Wherever there is a province of that benevolent and all-accessible empire, whether on earth or elsewhere, such are the gentle spirits that must inhabit it. To such simplicity, or the resemblance of it, must they come. Such must be the ready confidence of their hearts and creativeness of their fancy. And so ignorant must they be of the "knowledge of good and evil," losing their discernment of that self-created trouble, by enjoying the garden before them, and not being ashamed of what is kindly and innocent.

Hazlitt

Hazlitt

(1778-1830)

William Hazlitt is not, like Leigh Hunt, a minor writer. Less generally familiar than Lamb, he has nevertheless been considered by good critics to be almost, if not quite, Lamb's equal. Like Lamb's, his essays are both critical and personal—often, of course, the two types are mingled. As a critic he is original and daring, given to striking and unconventional generalizations, but accustomed also to support his opinions by sound and well-reasoned evidence. Only Lamb and Coleridge can dispute his claim to the title of leading critic of the early nineteenth century. Nevertheless, it is not as critic that he is best remembered; first of all it is as a personality that has perfectly expressed itself in the familiar essay.

Hazlitt seems so thoroughly fluent a writer that it is difficult to realize that when he first wrote it was with such slowness and difficulty as to cause him for a time to renounce literary ambition entirely. There was a time, he tells us in "Old Books," when he was "in vain trying, year after year, to write a single essay, nay a single page or sentence." Characteristically enough, he later looks back on even this aspect of his youth with regret: in "My First Acquaintance with Poets" he observes, "I can write fast enough now. Am I better than I was then? Oh no! One truth discovered, one pang of regret at not being able to express it, is better than all the fluency and flippancy in the world."

Such an expression of regret for a phase of his vanished youth offers a clue to much of his writing. He shared with many other young English liberals the intensest enthusiasm for the cause of the French Revolution, and the feeling that it was a high privilege to be allowed to live in an age that promised a new birth of freedom for the world. He might have said, with Wordsworth,

> Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
> But to be young was very heaven!

After the Bastille had fallen, and the excesses of the Revolution had alienated the sympathy of many Englishmen, Hazlitt continued to feel this enthusiam; almost alone among his countrymen, he later felt that

Napoleon was the very incarnation of democracy. He considered his own *Life of Napoleon* his most important work. Undoubtedly he thought himself to be, as Leigh Hunt said he was, "the only man of a warm set of politicians who remained true to his first love of mankind."

It is not surprising, then, that Hazlitt should often have thought of his contemporaries as renegades and apostates, and of the past, rather than the future, as the Golden Age. "I plunge into my past being, and revel there"—these words, from "On Going a Journey," are typical of his curious and almost morbid preoccupation with the past. "On Reading Old Books" suggests that even the books read in his youth are on a plane apart from all other books. Old companions Hazlitt might have regarded similarly, had they been true to their old convictions; as it is, he likens them to "meats served up too often, that lose their relish and their wholesomeness." In such an essay as "On the Pleasure of Hating," he gives full vent to the bitterness and despair that sometimes consumed him. But this is not all of Hazlitt. If there is the misanthropic Hazlitt of "On the Pleasure of Hating," there is also the well-poised Hazlitt of "On the Fear of Death," and the serene Hazlitt of "On a Sun-Dial." When we read essays like these, we understand how Lamb could give, as his final estimate of his friend's character, this judgment: "I should belie my own conscience if I said less than that I think W. H. to be in his natural and healthy state one of the wisest and finest spirits breathing."

Whatever the mood, "Hazlitt," as W. E. Henley remarks, "is ever Hazlitt: and at his highest moments Hazlitt is hard to beat, and has not these many years been beaten." And these "highest moments," it may be said, come remarkably often, considering the bulk of his work. His style, while always direct and crystal-clear, adapts itself with beautiful precision to the occasion; Hazlitt can be by turns eloquent, poetical, epigrammatic, terse. Through all his writing there runs the sense of a most vivid personality, that enjoys or suffers with equal vehemence, and pours itself out on paper (to use a favorite word of his own) with unabated "gusto."

On Going a Journey

ONE of the pleasantest things in the world is going a journey; but I like to go by myself. I can enjoy society in a room; but out of doors, nature is company enough for me. I am then never less alone than when alone.

The fields his study, nature was his book.[1]

I cannot see the wit of walking and talking at the same time. When I am in the country I wish to vegetate like the country. I am not for criticising hedgerows and black cattle. I go out of town in order to forget the town and all that is in it. There are those who for this purpose go to watering-places, and carry the metropolis with them. I like more elbow-room and fewer encumbrances. I like solitude, when I give myself up to it, for the sake of solitude; nor do I ask for

a friend in my retreat,
Whom I may whisper solitude is sweet.[2]

The soul of a journey is liberty, perfect liberty, to think, feel, do just as one pleases. We go a journey chiefly to be free of all impediments and of all inconveniences; to leave ourselves behind, much more to get rid of others. It is because I want a little breathing-space to muse on indifferent matters, where Contemplation

May plume her feathers and let grow her wings,
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impair'd,[3]

that I absent myself from the town for a while, without feeling at a loss the moment I am left by myself. Instead of a friend in a post-chaise or in a Tilbury,[4] to exchange good things with, and vary the same stale topics over again, for once let me have a truce with impertinence. Give me the clear blue sky over my head, and the green turf beneath my feet, a winding road before me, and a three hours' march to dinner—and then to thinking!

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[1] from Richard Bromfield's *The Farmer Boy.*
[2] from Cowper's *Retirement.*
[3] cf. Milton's *Comus,* 378-380.
[4] a two-wheeled open carriage.

It is hard if I cannot start some game on these lone heaths. I laugh, I run, I leap, I sing for joy. From the point of yonder rolling cloud I plunge into my past being, and revel there, as the sun-burnt Indian plunges headlong into the wave that wafts him to his native shore. Then long-forgotten things, like "sunken wrack and sumless treasuries," burst upon my eager sight, and I begin to feel, think, and be myself again. Instead of an awkward silence, broken by attempts at wit or dull common-places, mine is that undisturbed silence of the heart which alone is perfect eloquence. No one likes puns, alliterations, antitheses, argument, and analysis better than I do; but I sometimes had rather be without them. "Leave, oh, leave me to my repose!" I have just now other business in hand, which would seem idle to you, but is with me "very stuff o' the conscience." Is not this wild rose sweet without a comment? Does not this daisy leap to my heart set in its coat of emerald? Yet if I were to explain to you the circumstance that has so endeared it to me, you would only smile. Had I not better then keep it to myself, and let it serve me to brood over, from here to yonder craggy point, and from thence onward to the far-distant horizon? I should be but bad company all that way, and therefore prefer being alone. I have heard it said that you may, when the moody fit comes on, walk or ride on by yourself, and indulge your reveries. But this looks like a breach of manners, a neglect of others, and you are thinking all the time that you ought to rejoin your party. "Out upon such half-faced fellowship," say I. I like to be either entirely to myself, or entirely at the disposal of others; to talk or be silent, to walk or sit still, to be sociable or solitary. I was pleased with an observation of Mr. Cobbett's,[5] that "he thought it a bad French custom to drink our wine with our meals, and that an Englishman ought to do only one thing at a time." So I cannot talk and think, or in-

[5] William Cobbett, political writer and essayist.

dulge in melancholy musing and lively conversation by fits and starts. "Let me have a companion of my way," says Sterne, "were it but to remark how the shadows lengthen as the sun declines." It is beautifully said; but, in my opinion, this continual comparing of notes interferes with the involuntary impression of things upon the mind, and hurts the sentiment. If you only hint what you feel in a kind of dumb show, it is insipid: if you have to explain it, it is making a toil of a pleasure. You cannot read the book of nature without being perpetually put to the trouble of translating it for the benefit of others. I am for the synthetical method on a journey in preference to the analytical. I am content to lay in a stock of ideas then, and to examine and anatomise them afterwards. I want to see my vague notions float like the down of the thistle before the breeze, and not to have them entangled in the briars and thorns of controversy. For once, I like to have it all my own way; and this is impossible unless you are alone, or in such company as I do not covet. I have no objection to argue a point with any one for twenty miles of measured road, but not for pleasure. If you remark the scent of a bean-field crossing the road, perhaps your fellow-traveller has no smell. If you point to a distant object, perhaps he is short-sighted, and has to take out his glass to look at it. There is a feeling in the air, a tone in the colour of a cloud, which hits your fancy, but the effect of which you are unable to account for. There is then no sympathy, but an uneasy craving after it, and a dissatisfaction which pursues you on the way, and in the end probably produces ill-humour. Now I never quarrel with myself, and take all my own conclusions for granted till I find it necessary to defend them against objections. It is not merely that you may not be of accord on the objects and circumstances that present themselves before you—these may recall a number of objects, and lead to associations too delicate and refined to be possibly communicated to others. Yet these I love to cherish, and

sometimes still fondly clutch them, when I can escape from the throng to do so. To give way to our feelings before company seems extravagance or affectation; and, on the other hand, to have to unravel this mystery of our being at every turn, and to make others take an equal interest in it (otherwise the end is not answered), is a task to which few are competent. We must "give it an understanding, but no tongue." My old friend Coleridge, however, could do both. He could go on in the most delightful explanatory way over hill and dale, a summer's day, and convert a landscape into a didactic poem or a Pindaric ode. "He talked far above singing." If I could so clothe my ideas in sounding and flowing words, I might perhaps wish to have some one with me to admire the swelling theme; or I could be more content, were it possible for me still to hear his echoing voice in the woods of All-Foxden. They had "that fine madness in them which our first poets had"; and if they could have been caught by some rare instrument, would have breathed such strains as the following:

> Here be woods as green
> As any, air likewise as fresh and sweet
> As when smooth Zephyrus plays on the fleet
> Face of the curled stream, with flow'rs as many
> As the young spring gives, and as choice as any;
> Here be all new delights, cool streams and wells,
> Arbours o'ergrown with woodbines, caves and dells;
> Choose where thou wilt, whilst I sit by and sing,
> Or gather rushes to make many a ring
> For thy long fingers; tell thee tales of love,
> How the pale Phœbe, hunting in a grove,
> First saw the boy Endymion, from whose eyes
> She took eternal fire that never dies;
> How she convey'd him softly in a sleep,
> His temples bound with poppy, to the steep
> Head of old Latmos, where she stoops each night,
> Gilding the mountain with her brother's light,
> To kiss her sweetest.[6]

[6] Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess.*

Had I words and images at command like these, I would attempt to wake the thoughts that lie slumbering on golden ridges in the evening clouds: but at the sight of nature my fancy, poor as it is, droops and closes up its leaves, like flowers at sunset. I can make nothing out on the spot: I must have time to collect myself.

In general, a good thing spoils out-of-door prospects: it should be reserved for Table-talk. Lamb is for this reason, I take it, the worst company in the world out of doors; because he is the best within. I grant there is one subject on which it is pleasant to talk on a journey, and that is, what one shall have for supper when we get to our inn at night. The open air improves this sort of conversation or friendly altercation, by setting a keener edge on appetite. Every mile of the road heightens the flavour of the viands we expect at the end of it. How fine it is to enter some old town, walled and turreted, just at approach of nightfall, or to come to some straggling village, with the lights streaming through the surrounding gloom; and then, after inquiring for the best entertainment that the place affords, to "take one's ease at one's inn!" These eventful moments in our lives' history are too precious, too full of solid, heartfelt happiness to be frittered and dribbled away in imperfect sympathy. I would have them all to myself, and drain them to the last drop: they will do to talk of or to write about afterwards. What a delicate speculation it is, after drinking whole goblets of tea—

> The cups that cheer, but not inebriate—[7]

and letting the fumes ascend into the brain, to sit considering what we shall have for supper—eggs and a rasher, a rabbit smothered in onions, or an excellent veal cutlet! Sancho in such a situation once fixed on cow-heel; and his choice, though he could not help it, is not to be disparaged. Then, in the in-

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[7] Cowper's *Task*.

tervals of pictured scenery and Shandean contemplation,[8] to catch the preparation and the stir in the kitchen. *Procul, O procul este profani!*[9] These hours are sacred to silence and to musing, to be treasured up in the memory, and to feed the source of smiling thoughts hereafter. I would not waste them in idle talk; or if I must have the integrity of fancy broken in upon, I would rather it were by a stranger than a friend. A stranger takes his hue and character from the time and place; he is a part of the furniture and costume of an inn. If he is a Quaker, or from the West Riding of Yorkshire, so much the better. I do not even try to sympathise with him, and he breaks no squares.[10] I associate nothing with my travelling companion but present objects and passing events. In his ignorance of me and my affairs, I in a manner forget myself. But a friend reminds one of other things, rips up old grievances, and destroys the abstraction of the scene. He comes in ungraciously between us and our imaginary character. Something is dropped in the course of conversation that gives a hint of your profession and pursuits; or from having some one with you that knows the less sublime portions of your history, it seems that other people do. You are no longer a citizen of the world; but your "unhoused free condition is put into circumspection and confine." The incognito of an inn is one of its striking privileges—"lord of one's self, uncumbered with a name." Oh! it is great to shake off the trammels of the world and of public opinion—to lose our importunate, tormenting, everlasting personal identity in the elements of nature, and become the creature of the moment, clear of all ties—to hold to the universe only by a dish of sweetbreads, and to owe nothing but the score of the evening—and no longer seeking for applause and meeting

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[8] random and discursive meditation, like that of the elder Shandy in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*.
[9] Away, away, ye uninitiated (Vergil's *Æneid*).
[10] does no harm.

with contempt, to be known by no other title than *the Gentleman in the parlour!* One may take one's choice of all characters in this romantic state of uncertainty as to one's real pretensions, and become indefinitely respectable and negatively right worshipful. We baffle prejudice and disappoint conjecture; and from being so to others, begin to be objects of curiosity and wonder even to ourselves. We are no more those hackneyed common-places that we appear in the world; an inn restores us to the level of nature, and quits scores with society! I have certainly spent some enviable hours at inns—sometimes when I have been left entirely to myself, and have tried to solve some metaphysical problem, as once at Witham Common, where I found out the proof that likeness is not a case of the association of ideas—at other times, when there have been pictures in the room, as at St. Neot's (I think it was), where I first met with Gribelin's engravings of the Cartoons,[11] into which I entered at once, and at a little inn on the borders of Wales, where there happened to be hanging some of Westall's drawings, which I compared triumphantly (for a theory that I had, not for the admired artist) with the figure of a girl who had ferried me over the Severn, standing up in a boat between me and the twilight—at other times I might mention luxuriating in books, with a peculiar interest in this way, as I remember sitting up half the night to read *Paul and Virginia*,[12] which I picked up at an inn at Bridgewater, after being drenched in the rain all day; and at the same place I got through two volumes of Madame d'Arblay's *Camilla*.[13] It was on the 10th of April 1798 that I sat down to a volume of the *New Eloise*,[14] at the inn at Llangollen, over a bottle of sherry and a cold chicken. The letter I chose was that in which St. Preux describes his

[11] drawings to be reproduced in tapestry; here, those of Raphael.
[12] a novel by Saint Pierre (1788).
[13] a novel by Frances Burney (1796).
[14] *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), the famous romance of Rousseau.

feelings as he first caught a glimpse from the heights of the Jura of the Pays de Vaud, which I had brought with me as a *bon bouche*[15] to crown the evening with. It was my birthday, and I had for the first time come from a place in the neighbourhood to visit this delightful spot. The road to Llangollen turns off between Chirk and Wrexham; and on passing a certain point you come all at once upon the valley, which opens like an amphitheatre, broad, barren hills rising in majestic state on either side, with "green upland swells that echo to the bleat of flocks" below, and the river Dee babbling over its stony bed in the midst of them. The valley at this time "glittered green with sunny showers," and a budding ash-tree dipped its tender branches in the chiding stream. How proud, how glad I was to walk along the high road that overlooks the delicious prospect, repeating the lines which I have just quoted from Mr. Coleridge's poems! But besides the prospect which opened beneath my feet, another also opened to my inward sight, a heavenly vision, on which were written, in letters large as Hope could make them, these four words, LIBERTY, GENIUS, LOVE, VIRTUE; which have since faded into the light of common day, or mock my idle gaze.

The beautiful is vanished, and returns not.[16]

Still I would return some time or other to this enchanted spot; but I would return to it alone. What other self could I find to share that influx of thoughts, of regret, and delight, the fragments of which I could hardly conjure up to myself, so much have they been broken and defaced. I could stand on some tall rock, and overlook the precipice of years that separates me from what I then was. I was at that time going shortly to visit the poet whom I have above named. Where is he now?

[15] dainty morsel.
[16] from Coleridge's version of Schiller's *Wallensteins Tod*.

Not only I myself have changed; the world, which was then new to me, has become old and incorrigible. Yet will I turn to thee in thought, O sylvan Dee, in joy, in youth and gladness as thou then wert; and thou shalt always be to me the river of Paradise, where I will drink of the waters of life freely!

There is hardly anything that shows the short-sightedness or capriciousness of the imagination more than travelling does. With change of place we change our ideas; nay, our opinions and feelings. We can by an effort indeed transport ourselves to old and long-forgotten scenes, and then the picture of the mind revives again; but we forget those that we have just left. It seems that we can think but of one place at a time. The canvas of the fancy is but of a certain extent, and if we paint one set of objects upon it, they immediately efface every other. We cannot enlarge our conceptions, we only shift our point of view. The landscape bares its bosom to the enraptured eye, we take our fill of it, and seem as if we could form no other image of beauty or grandeur. We pass on, and think no more of it: the horizon that shuts it from our sight also blots it from our memory like a dream. In travelling through a wild barren country I can form no idea of a woody and cultivated one. It appears to me that all the world must be barren, like what I see of it. In the country we forget the town, and in town we despise the country. "Beyond Hyde Park," says Sir Fopling Flutter,[17] "all is a desert." All that part of the map that we do not see before us is blank. The world in our conceit of it is not much bigger than a nutshell. It is not one prospect expanded into another, county joined to county, kingdom to kingdom, land to seas, making an image voluminous and vast;—the mind can form no larger idea of space than the eye can take in at a single glance. The rest is a name written in a map, a calculation of arithmetic. For instance, what is the

[17] the hero of Etherege's *The Man of Mode*.

true signification of that immense mass of territory and population known by the name of China to us? An inch of pasteboard on a wooden globe, of no more account than a China orange! Things near us are seen of the size of life: things at a distance are diminished to the size of the understanding. We measure the universe by ourselves, and even comprehend the texture of our own being only piecemeal. In this way, however, we remember an infinity of things and places. The mind is like a mechanical instrument that plays a great variety of tunes, but it must play them in succession. One idea recalls another, but it at the same time excludes all others. In trying to renew old recollections, we cannot as it were unfold the whole web of our existence; we must pick out the single threads. So in coming to a place where we have formerly lived, and with which we have intimate associations, every one must have found that the feeling grows more vivid the nearer we approach the spot, from the mere anticipation of the actual impression: we remember circumstances, feelings, persons, faces, names that we had not thought of for years; but for the time all the rest of the world is forgotten!—To return to the question I have quitted above:—

I have no objection to go to see ruins, aqueducts, pictures, in company with a friend or a party, but rather the contrary, for the former reason reversed. They are intelligible matters, and will bear talking about. The sentiment here is not tacit, but communicable and overt. Salisbury Plain is barren of criticism, but Stonehenge[18] will bear a discussion antiquarian, picturesque, and philosophical. In setting out on a party of pleasure, the first consideration always is where we shall go to: in taking a solitary ramble, the question is what we shall meet with by the way. "The mind is its own place"; nor are we anxious to arrive at the end of our journey. I can myself

[18] the famous monument of prehistoric stones, on Salisbury Plain.

do the honours indifferently well to works of art and curiosity. I once took a party to Oxford with no mean *éclat*—showed them that seat of the Muses at a distance,

With glistering spires and pinnacles adorn'd—[19]

descanted on the learned air that breathes from the grassy quadrangles and stone walls of halls and colleges—was at home in the Bodleian [20]; and at Blenheim [21] quite superseded the powdered Cicerone that attended us, and that pointed in vain with his wand to commonplace beauties in matchless pictures. As another exception to the above reasoning, I should not feel confident in venturing on a journey in a foreign country without a companion. I should want at intervals to hear the sound of my own language. There is an involuntary antipathy in the mind of an Englishman to foreign manners and notions that requires the assistance of social sympathy to carry it off. As the distance from home increases, this relief, which was at first a luxury, becomes a passion and an appetite. A person would almost feel stifled to find himself in the deserts of Arabia without friends and countrymen: there must be allowed to be something in the view of Athens or old Rome that claims the utterance of speech; and I own that the Pyramids are too mighty for any single contemplation. In such situations, so opposite to all one's ordinary train of ideas, one seems a species by one's-self, a limb torn off from society, unless one can meet with instant fellowship and support. Yet I did not feel this want or craving very pressing once, when I first set my foot on the laughing shores of France. Calais was peopled with novelty and delight. The confused, busy murmur of the place was like oil and wine poured into my ears; nor did the mariners' hymn, which was sung from the top of an old crazy vessel in the har-

[19] from *Paradise Lost*.
[20] the University Library.
[21] the estate, near Oxford, of the Duke of Marlborough.

bour, as the sun went down, send an alien sound into my soul. I only breathed the air of general humanity. I walked over "the vine-covered hills and gay regions of France," erect and satisfied; for the image of man was not cast down and chained to the foot of arbitrary thrones: I was at no loss for language, for that of all the great schools of painting was open to me. The whole is vanished like a shade. Pictures, heroes, glory, freedom, all are fled: nothing remains but the Bourbons [22] and the French people!—There is undoubtedly a sensation in travelling into foreign parts that is to be had nowhere else; but it is more pleasing at the time than lasting. It is too remote from our habitual associations to be a common topic of discourse or reference, and, like a dream or another state of existence, does not piece into our daily modes of life. It is an animated but a momentary hallucination. It demands an effort to exchange our actual for our ideal identity; and to feel the pulse of our old transports revive very keenly, we must "jump" all our present comforts and connections. Our romantic and itinerant character is not to be domesticated. Dr. Johnson remarked how little foreign travel added to the facilities of conversation in those who had been abroad. In fact, the time we have spent there is both delightful, and in one sense instructive; but it appears to be cut out of our substantial, downright existence, and never to join kindly on to it. We are not the same, but another, and perhaps more enviable individual, all the time we are out of our own country. We are lost to ourselves, as well as our friends. So the poet somewhat quaintly sings:

Out of my country and myself I go.[23]

Those who wish to forget painful thoughts, do well to absent

[22] the French royal house.
[23] probably by Hazlitt himself.

themselves for a while from the ties and objects that recall them; but we can be said only to fulfil our destiny in the place that gave us birth. I should on this account like well enough to spend the whole of my life in travelling abroad, if I could anywhere borrow another life to spend afterwards at home!

On Reading Old Books

I HATE to read new books. There are twenty or thirty volumes that I have read over and over again, and these are the only ones that I have any desire ever to read at all. It was a long time before I could bring myself to sit down to the *Tales of My Landlord,* but now that author's works have made a considerable addition to my scanty library. I am told that some of Lady Morgan's are good, and have been recommended to look into *Anastasius;* but I have not yet ventured upon that task. A lady, the other day, could not refrain from expressing her surprise to a friend, who said he had been reading *Delphine:*—she asked,—If it had not been published some time back? Women judge of books as they do of fashions or complexions, which are admired only "in their newest gloss." That is not my way. I am not one of those who trouble the circulating libraries much, or pester the booksellers for mail-coach copies of standard periodical publications. I cannot say that I am greatly addicted to black-letter, but I profess myself well versed in the marble bindings of Andrew Millar, in the middle of the last century; nor does my taste revolt at Thurlow's *State Papers,* in Russia leather; or an ample impression of Sir William Temple's *Essays,* with a portrait after Sir Godfrey Kneller in front. I do not think altogether the worse of a book for having survived the author a generation or two. I have more confidence in the dead than the living. Contemporary writers may generally be divided into two classes—one's friends

or one's foes. Of the first we are compelled to think too well, and of the last we are disposed to think too ill, to receive much genuine pleasure from the perusal, or to judge fairly of the merits of either. One candidate for literary fame, who happens to be of our acquaintance, writes finely, and like a man of genius; but unfortunately has a foolish face, which spoils a delicate passage; another inspires us with the highest respect for his personal talents and character, but does not quite come up to our expectations in print. All these contradictions and petty details interrupt the calm current of our reflections. If you want to know what any of the authors were who lived before our time, and are still objects of anxious inquiry, you have only to look into their works. But the dust and smoke and noise of modern literature have nothing in common with the pure, silent air of immortality.

When I take up a work that I have read before (the oftener the better), I know what I have to expect. The satisfaction is not lessened by being anticipated. When the entertainment is altogether new, I sit down to it as I should to a strange dish—turn and pick out a bit here and there, and am in doubt what to think of the composition. There is a want of confidence and security to second appetite. New-fangled books are also like made-dishes in this respect, that they are generally little else than hashes and *rifaccimentos* [24] of what has been served up entire and in a more natural state at other times. Besides, in thus turning to a well-known author, there is not only an assurance that my time will not be thrown away, or my palate nauseated with the most insipid or vilest trash, but I shake hands with, and look an old, tried, and valued friend in the face, compare notes, and chat the hours away. It is true, we form dear friendships with such ideal guests—dearer, alas! and more lasting, than those with our most intimate acquaintance.

[24] recastings.

In reading a book which is an old favourite with me (say the first novel I ever read) I not only have the pleasure of imagination and of a critical relish of the work, but the pleasures of memory added to it. It recalls the same feelings and associations which I had in first reading it, and which I can never have again in any other way. Standard productions of this kind are links in the chain of our conscious being. They bind together the different scattered divisions of our personal identity. They are landmarks and guides in our journey through life. They are pegs and loops on which we can hang up, or from which we can take down, at pleasure, the wardrobe of a moral imagination, the relics of our best affections, the tokens and records of our happiest hours. They are "for thoughts and for remembrance!" They are like Fortunatus's Wishing Cap—they give us the best riches—those of Fancy; and transport us, not over half the globe, but (which is better) over half our lives, at a word's notice!

My father Shandy solaced himself with Bruscambille.[24a] Give me for this purpose a volume of *Peregrine Pickle* or *Tom Jones*. Open either of them anywhere—at the Memoirs of Lady Vane, or the adventures at the masquerade with Lady Bellaston, or the disputes between Thwackum and Square, or the escape of Molly Seagrim, or the incident of Sophia and her muff, or the edifying prolixity of her aunt's lecture—and there I find the same delightful, busy, bustling scene as ever, and feel myself the same as when I was first introduced into the midst of it. Nay, sometimes the sight of an odd volume of these good old English authors on a stall, or the name lettered on the back among others on the shelves of a library, answers the purpose, revives the whole train of ideas, and sets "the puppets dallying." Twenty years are struck off the list, and I am a child again. A sage philosopher, who was not a very wise man, said that he

[24a] cf. *Tristram Shandy*, Bk. III, chap. 35.

should like very well to be young again, if he could take his experience along with him. This ingenious person did not seem to be aware, by the gravity of his remark, that the great advantage of being young is to be without this weight of experience, which he would fain place upon the shoulders of youth, and which never comes too late with years. Oh! what a privilege to be able to let this hump, like Christian's burthen, drop from off one's back, and transport oneself, by the help of a little musty duodecimo, to the time when "ignorance was bliss," and when we first got a peep at the raree-show [25] of the world, through the glass of fiction—gazing at mankind, as we do at wild beasts in a menagerie, through the bars of their cages—or at curiosities in a museum, that we must not touch! For myself, not only are the old ideas of the contents of the work brought back to my mind in all their vividness, but the old associations of the faces and persons of those I then knew, as they were in their lifetime —the place where I sat to read the volume, the day when I got it, the feeling of the air, the fields, the sky—return, and all my early impressions with them. This is better to me—those places, those times, those persons, and those feelings that come across me as I retrace the story and devour the page, are to me better far than the wet sheets of the last new novel from the Ballantyne press, to say nothing of the Minerva press in Leadenhall Street. It is like visiting the scenes of early youth. I think of the time "when I was in my father's house, and my path ran down with butter and honey"—when I was a little, thoughtless child, and had no other wish or care but to con my daily task, and be happy! *Tom Jones,* I remember, was the first work that broke the spell. It came down in numbers once a fortnight, in Cooke's pocket-edition, embellished with cuts. I had hitherto read only in school-books, and a tiresome ecclesiastical history (with the exception of Mrs. Radcliffe's

[25] peep-show.

Romance of the Forest): but this had a different relish with it—"sweet in the mouth," though not "bitter in the belly." It smacked of the world I lived in, and in which I was to live—and showed me groups, "gay creatures" not "of the element," but of the earth; not "living in the clouds," but travelling the same road that I did;—some that had passed on before me, and others that might soon overtake me. My heart had palpitated at the thoughts of a boarding-school ball, or gala-day at Midsummer or Christmas: but the world I had found out in Cooke's edition of the *British Novelists* was to me a dance through life, a perpetual gala-day. The sixpenny numbers of this work regularly contrived to leave off just in the middle of a sentence, and in the nick of a story, where Tom Jones discovers Square behind the blanket; or where Parson Adams, in the inextricable confusion of events, very undesignedly gets to bed to Mrs. Slip-slop. Let me caution the reader against this impression of *Joseph Andrews;* for there is a picture of Fanny in it which he should not set his heart on, lest he should never meet with anything like it; or if he should, it would, perhaps, be better for him that he had not. It was just like —— ——! With what eagerness I used to look forward to the next number, and open the prints! Ah! never again shall I feel the enthusiastic delight with which I gazed at the figures, and anticipated the story and adventures of Major Bath and Commodore Trunnion, of Trim and my Uncle Toby, of Don Quixote and Sancho and Dapple, of Gil Blas and Dame Lorenza Sephora, of Laura and the fair Lucretia, whose lips open and shut like buds of roses. To what nameless ideas did they give rise—with what airy delights I filled up the outlines, as I hung in silence over the page! Let me still recall them, that they may breathe fresh life into me, and that I may live that birthday of thought and romantic pleasure over again! Talk of the *ideal!* This is the only true ideal—the heavenly tints of Fancy reflected in the bubbles that float upon the spring-tide of human life.

O Memory! shield me from the world's poor strife,
And give those scenes thine everlasting life! [26]

The paradox with which I set out is, I hope, less startling than it was; the reader will, by this time, have been let into my secret. Much about the same time, or I believe rather earlier, I took a particular satisfaction in reading Chubb's *Tracts*, and I often think I will get them again to wade through. There is a high gusto of polemical divinity in them; and you fancy that you hear a club of shoemakers at Salisbury debating a disputable text from one of St. Paul's Epistles in a workmanlike style, with equal shrewdness and pertinacity. I cannot say much for my metaphysical studies, into which I launched shortly after with great ardour, so as to make a toil of a pleasure. I was presently entangled in the briars and thorns of subtle distinctions—of "fate, free-will, fore-knowledge absolute," though I cannot add that "in their wandering mazes I found no end"; for I did arrive at some very satisfactory and potent conclusions; nor will I go so far, however ungrateful the subject might seem, as to exclaim with Marlowe's Faustus—"Would I had never seen Wittenberg, never read book"—that is, never studied such authors as Hartley, Hume, Berkeley, etc. Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding* is, however, a work from which I never derived either pleasure or profit; and Hobbes, dry and powerful as he is, I did not read till long afterwards. I read a few poets, which did not much hit my taste—for I would have the reader understand, I am deficient in the faculty of imagination; but I fell early upon French romances and philosophy, and devoured them tooth-and-nail. Many a dainty repast have I made of the *New Eloise;*—the description of the kiss; the excursion on the water; the letter of St. Preux, recalling the time of their first loves; and the account of Julia's death; these I read over and over

[26] very likely by the essayist himself.

again with unspeakable delight and wonder. Some years after, when I met with this work again, I found I had lost nearly my whole relish for it (except some few parts), and was, I remember, very much mortified with the change in my taste, which I sought to attribute to the smallness and gilt edges of the edition I had bought, and its being perfumed with rose-leaves. Nothing could exceed the gravity, the solemnity with which I carried home and read the Dedication to the *Social Contract*, with some other pieces of the same author, which I had picked up at a stall in a coarse leathern cover. Of the *Confessions* I have spoken elsewhere, and may repeat what I have said—"Sweet is the dew of their memory, and pleasant the balm of their recollection!" Their beauties are not "scattered like stray-gifts o'er the earth," but sown thick on the page, rich and rare. I wish I had never read the *Emilius*, or read it with implicit faith. I had no occasion to pamper my natural aversion to affectation or pretence, by romantic and artificial means. I had better have formed myself on the model of Sir Fopling Flutter. There is a class of persons whose virtues and most shining qualities sink in, and are concealed by, an absorbent ground of modesty and reserve; and such a one I do, without vanity, profess myself.[27] Now these are the very persons who are likely to attach themselves to the character of Emilius, and of whom it is sure to be the bane. This dull, phlegmatic, retiring humour is not in a fair way to be corrected, but confirmed and rendered desperate, by being in that work held up as an object of imitation, as an example of simplicity and magnanimity—by coming upon us with all the recommendations of novelty, surprise, and superiority to the prejudices of the world—by being stuck upon a pedestal,

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[27] Nearly the same sentiment was wittily and happily expressed by a friend, who had some lottery puffs, which he had been employed to write, returned on his hands for their too great severity of thought and classical terseness of style, and who observed on that occasion that "Modest merit never can succeed!" [Hazlitt's note.]

made amiable, dazzling, a *leurre de dupe!*[28] The reliance on solid worth which it inculcates, the preference of sober truth to gaudy tinsel, hangs like a mill-stone round the neck of the imagination—"a load to sink a navy"—impedes our progress, and blocks up every prospect in life. A man, to get on, to be successful, conspicuous, applauded, should not retire upon the centre of his conscious resources, but be always at the circumference of appearances. He must envelop himself in a halo of mystery—he must ride in an equipage of opinion—he must walk with a train of self-conceit following him—he must not strip himself to a buff-jerkin, to the doublet and hose of his real merits, but must surround himself with a *cortège* of prejudices, like the signs of the Zodiac—he must seem anything but what he is, and then he may pass for anything he pleases. The world love to be amused by hollow professions, to be deceived by flattering appearances, to live in a state of hallucination; and can forgive everything but the plain, downright, simple, honest truth—such as we see it chalked out in the character of Emilius. To return from this digression, which is a little out of place here.

Books have in a great measure lost their power over me; nor can I revive the same interest in them as formerly. I perceive when a thing is good, rather than feel it. It is true,

> *Marcian Colonna* is a dainty book; [29]

and the reading of Mr. Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes* lately made me regret that I was not young again. The beautiful and tender images there conjured up, "come like shadows—so depart." The "tiger-moth's wings," which he has spread over his rich poetic blazonry, just flit across my fancy; the gorgeous twilight window which he has painted over again in his verse,

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[28] decoy for a foolish person.
[29] from a sonnet by Lamb, addressed to "Barry Cornwall," the author.

to me "blushes" almost in vain "with blood of queens and kings." I know how I should have felt at one time in reading such passages; and that is all. The sharp luscious flavour, the fine *aroma* is fled, and nothing but the stalk, the bran, the husk of literature is left. If any one were to ask me what I read now, I might answer with my Lord Hamlet in the play—"Words, words, words."—"What is the matter?"—*"Nothing!"*—They have scarce a meaning. But it was not always so. There was a time when to my thinking, every word was a flower or a pearl, like those which dropped from the mouth of the little peasant-girl in the Fairy tale, or like those that fall from the great preacher in the Caledonian Chapel! I drank of the stream of knowledge that tempted, but did not mock my lips, as of the river of life, freely. How eagerly I slaked my thirst of German sentiment, "as the hart that panteth for the water-springs"; how I bathed and revelled, and added my floods of tears to Goethe's *Sorrows of Werther,* and to Schiller's *Robbers*—

> Giving my stock of more to that which had too much! [30]

I read and assented with all my soul to Coleridge's fine Sonnet, beginning—

> Schiller! that hour I would have wish'd to die,
> If through the shuddering midnight I had sent,
> From the dark dungeon of the tow'r time-rent,
> That fearful voice, a famish'd father's cry!

I believe I may date my insight into the mysteries of poetry from the commencement of my acquaintance with the Authors of the *Lyrical Ballads;* at least, my discrimination of the higher sorts—not my predilection for such writers as Goldsmith or Pope: nor do I imagine they will say I got my liking for the

[30] adapted from *As You Like It.*

Novelists, or the comic writers—for the characters of Valentine, Tattle, or Miss Prue—from them. If so, I must have got from them what they never had themselves. In points where poetic diction and conception are concerned, I may be at a loss, and liable to be imposed upon: but in forming an estimate of passages relating to common life and manners, I cannot think I am a plagiarist from any man. I there "know my cue without a prompter." I may say of such studies, *Intus et in cute.*[31] I am just able to admire those literal touches of observation and description which persons of loftier pretensions overlook and despise. I think I comprehend something of the characteristic part of Shakespeare; and in him indeed all is characteristic, even the nonsense and poetry. I believe it was the celebrated Sir Humphry Davy who used to say that Shakespeare was rather a metaphysician than a poet. At any rate, it was not ill said. I wish that I had sooner known the dramatic writers contemporary with Shakespeare; for in looking them over about a year ago, I almost revived my old passion for reading, and my old delight in books, though they were very nearly new to me. The Periodical Essayists I read long ago. The *Spectator* I liked extremely: but the *Tatler* took my fancy most. I read the others soon after, the *Rambler,* the *Adventurer,* the *World,* the *Connoisseur.* I was not sorry to get to the end of them, and have no desire to go regularly through them again. I consider myself a thorough adept in Richardson. I like the longest of his novels best, and think no part of them tedious; nor should I ask to have anything better to do than to read them from beginning to end, to take them up when I chose, and lay them down when I was tired, in some old family mansion in the country, till every word and syllable relating to the bright Clarissa, the divine Clementina, the beautiful Pamela, "with every trick and line of their sweet favour," were once more

[31] intimately and under the skin.

"graven in my heart's table."[32] I have a sneaking kindness for Mackenzie's *Julia de Roubigné*—for the deserted mansion, and straggling gilli-flowers on the mouldering garden-wall; and still more for his *Man of Feeling;* not that it is better, nor so good; but at the time I read it, I sometimes thought of the heroine, Miss Walton, and of Miss —— together, and "that ligament, fine as it was, was never broken!"—One of the poets that I have always read with most pleasure, and can wander about in for ever with a sort of voluptuous indolence, is Spenser; and I like Chaucer even better. The only writer among the Italians I can pretend to any knowledge of is Boccaccio, and of him I cannot express half my admiration. His story of the Hawk I could read and think of from day to day, just as I would look at a picture of Titian's!

I remember, as long ago as the year 1798, going to a neighbouring town (Shrewsbury, where Farquhar has laid the plot of his *Recruiting Officer*) and bringing home with me, "at one proud swoop,"[33] a copy of Milton's *Paradise Lost,* and another of Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*—both which I have still; and I still recollect, when I see the covers, the pleasure with which I dipped into them as I returned with my double prize. I was set up for one while. That time is past "with all its giddy raptures": but I am still anxious to preserve its memory, "embalmed with odours."—With respect to the first of these works, I would be permitted to remark here in passing that it is a sufficient answer to the German criticism which has since been started against the character of Satan (viz., that it

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[32] During the peace of Amiens, a young English officer, of the name of Lovelace, was presented at Buonaparte's levee. Instead of the usual question, "Where have you served, Sir?" the First Consul immediately addressed him, "I perceive your name, Sir, is the same as that of the hero of Richardson's Romance!" Here was a Consul. The young man's uncle, who was called Lovelace, told me this anecdote while we were stopping together at Calais. I had also been thinking that his was the same name as that of the hero of Richardson's Romance. This is one of my reasons for liking Buonaparte. [Hazlitt's note.]

[33] a characteristic misquotation, this time of a very familiar phrase—"one fell swoop." (*Macbeth*)

is not one of disgusting deformity, or pure, defecated[34] malice), to say that Milton has there drawn, not the abstract principle of evil, not a devil incarnate, but a fallen angel. This is the Scriptural account, and the poet has followed it. We may safely retain such passages as that well-known one—

> —— His form had not yet lost
> All her original brightness; nor appear'd
> Less than archangel ruin'd; and the excess
> Of glory obscur'd—

for the theory, which is opposed to them, "falls flat upon the grunsel edge, and shames its worshippers." Let us hear no more, then, of this monkish cant, and bigoted outcry for the restoration of the horns and tail of the devil!—Again, as to the other work, Burke's *Reflections,* I took a particular pride and pleasure in it, and read it to myself and others for months afterwards. I had reason for my prejudice in favour of this author. To understand an adversary is some praise: to admire him is more. I thought I did both: I knew I did one. From the first time I ever cast my eyes on anything of Burke's (which was an extract from his "Letter to a Noble Lord" in a three-times-a-week paper, the *St. James's Chronicle,* in 1796), I said to myself, "This is true eloquence: this is a man pouring out his mind on paper." All other style seemed to me pedantic and impertinent. Dr. Johnson's was walking on stilts; and even Junius's (who was at that time a favourite with me), with all his terseness, shrunk up into little antithetic points and well-trimmed sentences. But Burke's style was forked and playful as the lightning, crested like the serpent. He delivered plain things on a plain ground; but when he rose, there was no end of his flights and circumgyrations—and in this very Letter, "he, like an eagle in a dove-cot, fluttered *his* Volscians," (the Duke

[34] cf. note 4, p. 221.

of Bedford and the Earl of Lauderdale) "in Corioli." I did not care for his doctrines. I was then, and am still, proof against their contagion; but I admired the author, and was considered as not a very staunch partisan of the opposite side, though I thought myself that an abstract proposition was one thing—a masterly transition, a brilliant metaphor, another. I conceived, too, that he might be wrong in his main argument, and yet deliver fifty truths in arriving at a false conclusion. I remember Coleridge assuring me, as a poetical and political set-off to my sceptical admiration, that Wordsworth had written an Essay on Marriage, which, for manly thought and nervous expression, he deemed incomparably superior. As I had not, at that time, seen any specimens of Mr. Wordsworth's prose style, I could not express my doubts on the subject. If there are greater prose-writers than Burke, they either lie out of my course of study, or are beyond my sphere of comprehension. I am too old to be a convert to a new mythology of genius. The niches are occupied, the tables are full. If such is still my admiration of this man's misapplied powers, what must it have been at a time when I myself was in vain trying, year after year, to write a single essay, nay, a single page or sentence; when I regarded the wonders of his pen with the longing eyes of one who was dumb and a changeling; and when to be able to convey the slightest conception of my meaning to others in words, was the height of an almost hopeless ambition! But I never measured others' excellences by my own defects: though a sense of my own incapacity, and of the steep, impassable ascent from me to them, made me regard them with greater awe and fondness. I have thus run through most of my early studies and favourite authors, some of whom I have since criticised more at large. Whether those observations will survive me, I neither know nor do I much care: but to the works themselves, "worthy of all acceptation," and to the feelings they have always excited in me since I could distinguish a meaning in language,

nothing shall ever prevent me from looking back with gratitude and triumph. To have lived in the cultivation of an intimacy with such works, and to have familiarly relished such names, is not to have lived quite in vain.

There are other authors whom I have never read, and yet whom I have frequently had a great desire to read, from some circumstance relating to them. Among these is Lord Clarendon's *History of the Grand Rebellion,* after which I have a hankering, from hearing it spoken of by good judges—from my interest in the events, and knowledge of the characters from other sources, and from having seen fine portraits of most of them. I like to read a well-penned character, and Clarendon is said to have been a master in his way. I should like to read Froissart's *Chronicles,* Holinshed and Stowe, and Fuller's *Worthies.* I intend, whenever I can, to read Beaumont and Fletcher all through. There are fifty-two of their plays, and I have only read a dozen or fourteen of them. *A Wife for a Month* and *Thierry and Theodoret* are, I am told, delicious, and I can believe it. I should like to read the speeches in Thucydides, and Guicciardini's *History of Florence,* and *Don Quixote* in the original. I have often thought of reading the *Loves of Persiles and Sigismunda,* and the *Galatea* of the same author. But I somehow reserve them like "another Yarrow." I should also like to read the last new novel (if I could be sure it was so) of the author of *Waverley*:— no one would be more glad than I to find it the best!

On the Pleasure of Hating

THERE is a spider crawling along the matted floor of the room where I sit (not the one which has been so well allegorised in the admirable *Lines to a Spider,*[35] but another of

[35] Probably the refence is to lines with this title which appeared in the *Liberal,* a periodical edited by Byron, Shelley, and Leigh Hunt.

the same edifying breed); he runs with heedless, hurried haste, he hobbles awkwardly towards me, he stops: he sees the giant shadow before him, and, at a loss whether to retreat or proceed, meditates his huge foe. But as I do not start up and seize upon the straggling caitiff, as he would upon a hapless fly within his toils, he takes heart, and ventures on, with mingled cunning, impudence, and fear. As he passes me, I lift up the matting to assist his escape, am glad to get rid of the unwelcome intruder, and shudder at the recollection after he is gone. A child, a woman, a clown, or a moralist a century ago, would have crushed the little reptile to death: my philosophy has got beyond that. I bear the creature no ill-will, but still I hate the very sight of it. The spirit of malevolence survives the practical exertion of it. We learn to curb our will and keep our overt actions within the bounds of humanity, long before we can subdue our sentiments and imaginations to the same mild tone. We give up the external demonstrations, the *brute* violence, but cannot part with the essence or principle of hostility. We do not tread upon the poor little animal in question (that seems barbarous and pitiful!) but we regard it with a sort of mystic horror and superstitious loathing. It will ask another hundred years of fine writing and hard thinking to cure us of the prejudice, and make us feel towards this ill-omened tribe with something of "the milk of human kindness," instead of their own shyness and venom.

Nature seems (the more we look into it) made up of antipathies: without something to hate, we should lose the very spring of thought and action. Life would turn to a stagnant pool, were it not ruffled by the jarring interests, the unruly passions, of men. The white streak in our own fortunes is brightened (or just rendered visible) by making all around it as dark as possible; so the rainbow paints its form upon the cloud. Is it pride? Is it envy? Is it the force of contrast? Is it weakness or malice? But so it is, that there is a secret affinity, a

hankering after evil in the human mind, and that it takes a perverse, but a fortunate delight in mischief, since it is a never-failing source of satisfaction. Pure good soon grows insipid, wants variety and spirit. Pain is a bitter-sweet, which never surfeits. Love turns, with a little indulgence, to indifference or disgust: hatred alone is immortal. Do we not see this principle at work everywhere? Animals torment and worry one another without mercy: children kill flies for sport: every one reads the accidents and offences in a newspaper, as the cream of the jest: a whole town runs to be present at a fire, and the spectator by no means exults to see it extinguished. It is better to have it so, but it diminishes the interest; and our feelings take part with our passions rather than with our understandings. Men assemble in crowds, with eager enthusiasm, to witness a tragedy: but if there were an execution going forward in the next street, as Mr. Burke [36] observes, the theatre would be left empty. A strange cur in a village, an idiot, a crazy woman, are set upon and baited by the whole community. Public nuisances are in the nature of public benefits. How long did the Pope, the Bourbons, and the Inquisition keep the people of England in breath, and supply them with nick-names to vent their spleen upon! Had they done us any harm of late? No: but we have always a quantity of superfluous bile upon the stomach, and we wanted an object to let it out upon. How loth were we to give up our pious belief in ghosts and witches, because we liked to persecute the one, and frighten ourselves to death with the other! It is not the quality so much as the quantity of excitement that we are anxious about: we cannot bear a state of indifference and *ennui:* the mind seems to abhor a *vacuum* as much as ever matter was supposed to do. Even when the spirit of the age (that is, the progress of intellectual refinement, warring with our natural infirmities) no longer allows us to carry our

[36] in *The Sublime and the Beautiful.*

vindictive and headstrong humours into effect, we try to revive them in description, and keep up the old bugbears, the phantoms of our terror and our hate, in imagination. We burn Guy Fawkes in effigy, and the hooting and buffeting and maltreating that poor tattered figure of rags and straw makes a festival in every village in England once a year. Protestants and Papists do not now burn one another at the stake: but we subscribe to new editions of Fox's *Book of Martyrs;* and the secret of the success of the *Scotch Novels* [37] is much the same: they carry us back to the feuds, the heart-burnings, the havoc, the dismay, the wrongs and the revenge of a barbarous age and people—to the rooted prejudices and deadly animosities of sects and parties in politics and religion, and contending chiefs and clans in war and intrigue. We feel the full force of the spirit of hatred with all of them in turn. As we read, we throw aside the trammels of civilisation, the flimsy veil of humanity. "Off, you lendings!" The wild beast resumes its sway within us, we feel like hunting-animals, and as the hound starts in his sleep and rushes on the chase in fancy, the heart rouses itself in its native lair, and utters a wild cry of joy, at being restored once more to freedom and lawless, unrestrained impulses. Every one has his full swing, or goes to the Devil his own way. Here are no Jeremy Bentham Panopticons,[38] none of Mr. Owen's impassable Parallelograms,[39] (Rob Roy would have spurned and poured a thousand curses on them), no long calculations of self-interest: the will takes its instant way to its object, as the mountain-torrent flings itself over the precipice: the greatest possible good of each individual consists in doing all the mischief he can to his neighbour: that is charming, and finds a sure and sympathetic chord in every breast! So Mr. Irving, the cele-

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[37] by Scott.
[38] the name Jeremy Bentham gave to his scheme of prison supervision.
[39] The reference is to Robert Owen's *New View of Society*, which Hazlitt has elsewhere criticized.

brated preacher, has rekindled the old, original, almost exploded hell-fire in the aisles of the Caledonian Chapel,[40] as they introduce the real water of the New River at Sadler's Wells,[41] to the delight and astonishment of his fair audience. *'Tis pretty, though a plague,* to sit and peep into the pit of Tophet, to play at *snap-dragon* with flames and brimstone (it gives a smart electrical shock, a lively fillip to delicate constitutions), and to see Mr. Irving, like a huge Titan, looking as grim and swarthy as if he had to forge tortures for all the damned! What a strange being man is! Not content with doing all he can to vex and hurt his fellows here, "upon this bank and shoal of time," where one would think there were heart-aches, pain, disappointment, anguish, tears, sighs, and groans enough, the bigoted maniac takes him to the top of the high peak of school divinity to hurl him down the yawning gulf of penal fire; his speculative malice asks eternity to wreak its infinite spite in, and calls on the Almighty to execute its relentless doom! The cannibals burn their enemies and eat them in good-fellowship with one another: meek Christian divines cast those who differ from them but a hair's breadth, body and soul, into hell-fire, for the glory of God and the good of His creatures! It is well that the power of such persons is not co-ordinate with their wills: indeed, it is from the sense of their weakness and inability to control the opinions of others, that they thus "outdo termagant," [42] and endeavour to frighten them into conformity by big words and monstrous denunciations.

The pleasure of hating, like a poisonous mineral, eats into the heart of religion, and turns it to rankling spleen and bigotry; it makes patriotism an excuse for carrying fire, pestilence, and famine into other lands: it leaves to virtue nothing but the

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[40] where Irving, according to Hazlitt's essay on him in *The Spirit of the Age*, "gained an almost unprecedented . . . popularity as a preacher."
[41] a theatre in Clerkenwell, London.
[42] an echo of the phrase "o'erdoing termagant" (*Hamlet*, III, 2).

spirit of censoriousness, and a narrow, jealous, inquisitorial watchfulness over the actions and motives of others. What have the different sects, creeds, doctrines in religion been but so many pretexts set up for men to wrangle, to quarrel, to tear one another in pieces about, like a target as a mark to shoot at? Does any one suppose that the love of country in an Englishman implies any friendly feeling or disposition to serve another bearing the same name? No, it means only hatred to the French or the inhabitants of any other country that we happen to be at war with for the time. Does the love of virtue denote any wish to discover or amend our own faults? No, but it atones for an obstinate adherence to our own vices by the most virulent intolerance to human frailties. This principle is of a most universal application. It extends to good as well as evil: if it makes us hate folly, it makes us no less dissatisfied with distinguished merit. If it inclines us to resent the wrongs of others, it impels us to be as impatient of their prosperity. We revenge injuries: we repay benefits with ingratitude. Even our strongest partialities and likings soon take this turn. "That which was luscious as locusts, anon becomes bitter as coloquintida";[43] and love and friendship melt in their own fires. We hate old friends: we hate old books: we hate old opinions; and at last we come to hate ourselves.

I have observed that few of those whom I have formerly known most intimate continue on the same friendly footing, or combine the steadiness with the warmth of attachment. I have been acquainted with two or three knots of inseparable companions, who saw each other "six days in the week," that have broken up and dispersed. I have quarrelled with almost all my old friends, (they might say this is owing to my bad temper, but) they have also quarrelled with one another. What is become of "that set of whist-players," celebrated by Elia in

[43] bitter-apple. (The quotation is from *Othello*, I, 3.)

his notable *Epistle to Robert Southey, Esq.*[44] (and now I think of it—that I myself have celebrated [45] in this very volume) "that for so many years called Admiral Burney friend?" They are scattered, like last year's snow. Some of them are dead, or gone to live at a distance, or pass one another in the street like strangers; or if they stop to speak, do it as coolly and try to *cut* one another as soon as possible. Some of us have grown rich, others poor. Some have got places under Government, others a *niche* in the Quarterly Review. Some of us have dearly earned a name in the world; whilst others remain in their original privacy. We despise the one, and envy and are glad to mortify the other. Times are changed; we cannot revive our old feelings; and we avoid the sight and are uneasy in the presence of those who remind us of our infirmity, and put us upon an effort at seeming cordiality, which embarrasses ourselves and does not impose upon our *quondam* [46] associates. Old friendships are like meats served up repeatedly, cold, comfortless, and distasteful. The stomach turns against them. Either constant intercourse and familiarity breed weariness and contempt; or if we meet again after an interval of absence, we appear no longer the same. One is too wise, another too foolish, for us; and we wonder we did not find this out before. We are disconcerted and kept in a state of continual alarm by the wit of one, or tired to death of the dullness of another. The *good things* of the first (besides leaving stings behind them) by repetition grow stale, and lose their startling effect; and the insipidity of the last becomes intolerable. The most amusing or instructive companion is at best like a favourite volume, that we wish after a time to *lay upon the shelf;* but as our friends are not willing to be laid there, this produces a misunderstanding and ill-blood between us.

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[44] Lamb's *Letter of Elia to Robert Southey, Esq.*, in the *London Magazine*, October, 1823.

[45] in the essay "On the Conversation of Authors."

[46] former.

Or if the zeal and integrity of friendship is not abated, or its career interrupted by any obstacle arising out of its own nature, we look out for other subjects of complaint and sources of dissatisfaction. We begin to criticise each other's dress, looks, and general character. "Such a one is a pleasant fellow, but it is a pity he sits so late!" Another fails to keep his appointments, and that is a sore that never heals. We get acquainted with some fashionable young men or with a mistress, and wish to introduce our friend; but he is awkward and a sloven, the interview does not answer, and this throws cold water on our intercourse. Or he makes himself obnoxious to opinion—and we shrink from our own convictions on the subject as an excuse for not defending him. All or any of these causes mount up in time to a ground of coolness or irritation—and at last they break out into open violence as the only amends we can make ourselves for suppressing them so long, or the readiest means of banishing recollections of former kindness so little compatible with our present feelings. We may try to tamper with the wounds or patch up the carcase of departed friendship; but the one will hardly bear the handling, and the other is not worth the trouble of embalming! The only way to be reconciled to old friends is to part with them for good: at a distance we may chance to be thrown back (in a waking dream) upon old times and old feelings: or at any rate we should not think of renewing our intimacy, till we have fairly *spit our spite,* or said, thought, and felt all the ill we can of each other. Or if we can pick a quarrel with some one else, and make him the scapegoat, this is an excellent contrivance to heal a broken bone. I think I must be friends with Lamb again, since he has written that magnanimous Letter to Southey, and told him a piece of his mind! I don't know what it is that attaches me to H——[47] so much, except that he and I, whenever we meet, sit in judg-

[47] Joseph Hume.

ment on another set of old friends, and "carve them as a dish fit for the gods." There was L—— H——,[48] John Scott,[49] Mrs. M——,[50] whose dark raven locks made a picturesque background to our discourse, B——,[51] who is grown fat, and is, they say, married, R——;[52] these had all separated long ago, and their foibles are the common link that holds us together. We do not affect to condole or whine over their follies; we enjoy, we laugh at them till we are ready to burst our sides, "*sans* intermission, for hours by the dial." We serve up a course of anecdotes, *traits*, master-strokes of character, and cut and hack at them till we are weary. Perhaps some of them are even with us. For my own part, as I once said, I like a friend the better for having faults that one can talk about. "Then," said Mrs. M——, "you will never cease to be a philanthropist!" Those in question were some of the choice-spirits of the age, not "fellows of no mark or likelihood"; and we so far did them justice: but it is well they did not hear what we sometimes said of them. I care little what any one says of me, particularly behind my back, and in the way of critical and analytical discussion: it is looks of dislike and scorn that I answer with the worst venom of my pen. The expression of the face wounds me more than the expressions of the tongue. If I have in one instance mistaken this expression, or resorted to this remedy where I ought not, I am sorry for it. But the face was too fine over which it mantled, and I am too old to have misunderstood it! . . . I sometimes go up to ——'s;[53] and as often as I do, resolve never to go again. I do not find the old homely welcome. The ghost of friendship meets me at the door, and sits with me all dinner-time. They have got a set of fine notions and new acquaintance.

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[48] Leigh Hunt.
[49] the unfortunate editor of the *London Magazine*, who was killed in a duel caused by a literary quarrel.
[50] Mrs. Montagu.
[51] probably Martin Burney.
[52] has not been identified.
[53] possibly Hume's.

Allusions to past occurrences are thought trivial, nor is it always safe to tuch upon more general subjects. M.[54] does not begin as he formerly did every five minutes, "Fawcett used to say," &c. That topic is something worn. The girls are grown up, and have a thousand accomplishments. I perceive there is a jealousy on both sides. They think I give myself airs, and I fancy the same of them. Every time I am asked, "If I do not think Mr. Washington Irving a very fine writer?" I shall not go again till I receive an invitation for Christmas Day in company with Mr. Liston.[55] The only intimacy I never found to flinch or fade was a purely intellectual one. There was none of the cant of candour in it, none of the whine of mawkish sensibility. Our mutual acquaintance were considered merely as subjects of conversation and knowledge, not at all of affection. We regarded them no more in our experiments than "mice in an air-pump": or like malefactors, they were regularly cut down and given over to the dissecting-knife. We spared neither friend nor foe. We sacrificed human infirmities at the shrine of truth. The skeletons of character might be seen, after the juice was extracted, dangling in the air like flies in cobwebs: or they were kept for future inspection in some refined acid. The demonstration was as beautiful as it was new. There is no surfeiting on gall: nothing keeps so well as a decoction of spleen. We grow tired of every thing but turning others into ridicule, and congratulating ourselves on their defects.

We take a dislike to our favourite books, after a time, for the same reason. We cannot read the same works for ever. Our honeymoon, even though we wed the Muse, must come to an end; and is followed by indifference, if not by disgust. There are some works, those indeed that produce the most striking effect at first by novelty and boldness of outline, that will not

[54] M. has not been identified.
[55] John Liston.

bear reading twice: others of a less extravagant character, and that excite and repay attention by a greater nicety of details, have hardly interest enough to keep alive our continued enthusiasm. The popularity of the most successful writers operates to wean us from them, by the cant and fuss that is made about them, by hearing their names everlastingly repeated, and by the number of ignorant and indiscriminate admirers they draw after them:—we as little like to have to drag others from their unmerited obscurity, lest we should be exposed to the charge of affectation and singularity of taste. There is nothing to be said respecting an author that all the world have made up their minds about: it is a thankless as well as hopeless task to recommend one that nobody has ever heard of. To cry up Shakespeare as the god of our idolatry, seems like a vulgar national prejudice: to take down a volume of Chaucer, or Spenser, or Beaumont and Fletcher, or Ford, or Marlowe, has very much the look of pedantry and egotism. I confess it makes me hate the very name of Fame and Genius when works like these are "gone into the wastes of time," while each successive generation of fools is busily employed in reading the trash of the day, and women of fashion gravely join with their waiting-maids in discussing the preference between the *Paradise Lost* and Mr. Moore's *Loves of the Angels.*[56] I was pleased the other day on going into a shop to ask, "If they had any of the *Scotch Novels?*" to be told—"That they had just sent out the last, Sir Andrew Wylie!"—Mr. Galt will also be pleased with this answer! The reputation of some books is raw and *unaired:* that of others is worm-eaten and mouldy. Why fix our affections on that which we cannot bring ourselves to have faith in, or which others have long ceased to trouble themselves about? I am half afraid to look into Tom Jones, lest it should not answer my expectations at this time of day; and if it did

[56] of which five editions were exhausted in 1823, the year of its publication.

not, I should certainly be disposed to fling it into the fire, and never look into another novel while I lived. But surely, it may be said, there are some works that, like nature, can never grow old; and that must always touch the imagination and passions alike! Or there are passages that seem as if we might brood over them all our lives, and not exhaust the sentiments of love and admiration they excite: they become favourites, and we are fond of them to a sort of dotage. Here is one:

> Sitting in my window
> Printing my thoughts in lawn, I saw a god,
> I thought (but it was you), enter our gates;
> My blood flew out and back again, as fast
> As I had puffed it forth and sucked it in
> Like breath; then was I called away in haste
> To entertain you: never was a man
> Thrust from a sheepcote to a sceptre, raised
> So high in thoughts as I; you left a kiss
> Upon these lips then, which I mean to keep
> From you for ever. I did hear you talk
> Far above singing! [57]

A passage like this indeed leaves a taste on the palate like nectar, and we seem in reading it to sit with the gods at their golden tables: but if we repeat it often in ordinary moods, it loses its flavour, becomes vapid, "the wine of *poetry* is drank, and but the lees remain." Or, on the other hand, if we call in the aid of extraordinary circumstances to set it off to advantage, as the reciting it to a friend, or after having our feelings excited by a long walk in some romantic situation, or while we

> play with Amaryllis in the shade,
> Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair [58]

we afterwards miss the accompanying circumstances, and in-

[57] from Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster* (V, 5).
[58] from *Lycidas*.

stead of transferring the recollection of them to the favourable side, regret what we have lost, and strive in vain to bring back "the irrevocable hour"—wondering in some instances how we survive it, and at the melancholy blank that is left behind! The pleasure rises to its height in some moment of calm solitude or intoxicating sympathy, declines ever after, and from the comparison and a conscious falling-off, leaves rather a sense of satiety and irksomeness behind it. . . . "Is it the same in pictures?" I confess it is, with all but those from Titian's [59] hand. I don't know why, but an air breathes from his landscapes, pure, refreshing, as if it came from other years; there is a look in his faces that never passes away. I saw one the other day. Amidst the heartless desolation and glittering finery of Fonthill,[60] there is a portfolio of the Dresden Gallery. It opens, and a young female head looks from it; a child, yet woman grown; with an air of rustic innocence and the graces of a princess, her eyes like those of doves, the lips about to open, a smile of pleasure dimpling the whole face, the jewels sparkling in her crisped hair, her youthful shape compressed in a rich antique dress, as the bursting leaves contain the April buds! Why do I not call up this image of gentle sweetness, and place it as a perpetual barrier between mischance and me? —It is because pleasure asks a greater effort of the mind to support it than pain; and we turn, after a little idle dalliance, from what we love to what we hate!

As to my old opinions, I am heartily sick of them. I have reason, for they have deceived me sadly. I was taught to think, and I was willing to believe, that genius was not a bawd, that virtue was not a mask, that liberty was not a name, that love had its seat in the human heart. Now I would care little if these words were struck out of the dictionary, or if I had

[59] the great Venetian painter.
[60] the residence of William Beckford, author of *Vathek*.

never heard them. They are become to my ears a mockery and a dream. Instead of patriots and friends of freedom, I see nothing but the tyrant and the slave, the people linked with kings to rivet on the chains of despotism and superstition. I see folly join with knavery, and together make up public spirit and public opinions. I see the insolent Tory, the blind Reformer, the coward Whig! If mankind had wished for what is right, they might have had it long ago. The theory is plain enough; but they are prone to mischief, "to every good work reprobate." I have seen all that had been done by the mighty yearnings of the spirit and intellect of men, "of whom the world was not worthy," and that promised a proud opening to truth and good through the vista of future years, undone by one man, with just glimmering of understanding enough to feel that he was a king, but not to comprehend how he could be king of a free people! I have seen this triumph celebrated by poets, the friends of my youth and the friends of man, but who were carried away by the infuriate tide that, setting in from a throne, bore down every distinction of right reason before it; and I have seen all those who did not join in applauding this insult and outrage on humanity proscribed, hunted down (they and their friends made a bye-word of), so that it has become an understood thing that no one can live by his talents or knowledge who is not ready to prostitute those talents and that knowledge to betray his species, and prey upon his fellow-man. "This was some time a mystery: but the time gives evidence of it." The echoes of liberty had awakened once more in Spain, and the morning of human hope dawned again: but that dawn has been overcast by the foul breath of bigotry, and those reviving sounds stifled by fresh cries from the time-rent towers of the Inquisition: man yielding (as it is fit he should) first to brute force, but more to the innate perversity and dastard spirit of his own nature, which leaves no room for farther hope or disappointment. And England, that

arch-reformer, that heroic deliverer, that mouther about liberty and tool of power, stands gaping by, not feeling the blight and mildew coming over it, nor its very bones crack and turn to a paste under the grasp and circling folds of this new monster —Legitimacy! In private life do we not see hypocrisy, servility, selfishness, folly, and impudence succeed, while modesty shrinks from the encounter, and merit is trodden under foot? How often is "the rose plucked from the forehead of a virtuous love to plant a blister there!" What chance is there of the success of real passion? What certainty of its continuance? Seeing all this as I do, and unravelling the web of human life into its various threads of meanness, spite, cowardice, want of feeling, and want of understanding, of indifference towards others and ignorance of ourselves—seeing custom prevail over all excellence, itself giving way to infamy—mistaken as I have been in my public and private hopes, calculating others from myself, and calculating wrong; always disappointed where I placed most reliance; the dupe of friendship, and the fool of love;—have I not reason to hate and to despise myself? Indeed I do; and chiefly for not having hated and despised the world enough.[61]

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[61] The only exception to the general drift of this Essay (and that is an exception in theory—I know of none in practice) is, that in reading we always take the right side, and make the case properly our own. Our imaginations are sufficiently excited, we have nothing to do with the matter but as a pure creation of the mind, and we therefore yield to the natural, unwarped impression of good and evil. Our own passions, interests, and prejudices out of the question, or in an abstracted point of view, we judge fairly and conscientiously; for conscience is nothing but the abstract idea of right and wrong. But no sooner have we to act or suffer, than the spirit of contradiction or some other demon comes into play, and there is an end of common sense and reason. Even the very strength of the speculative faculty, or the desire to square things with an *ideal* standard of perfection (whether we can or no) leads perhaps to half the absurdities and miseries of mankind. We are hunting after what we cannot find, and quarrelling with the good within our reach. Among the thousands that have read *The Heart of Midlothian* there assuredly never was a single person who did not wish Jeanie Deans success. Even Gentle George was sorry for what he had done, when it was over, though he would have played the same prank the next day: and the *unknown* author, in his immediate character of contributor to Blackwood and the Sentinel is about as respectable a personage as Daddy Ratton himself. On the stage, every one takes part with Othello against Iago. Do boys at school, in reading Homer, generally side with the Greeks or Trojans? [Hazlitt's note.]

On the Fear of Death

And our little life is rounded with a sleep.

PERHAPS the best cure for the fear of death is to reflect that life has a beginning as well as an end. There was a time when we were not: this gives us no concern—why then should it trouble us that a time will come when we shall cease to be? I have no wish to have been alive a hundred years ago, or in the reign of Queen Anne: why should I regret and lay it so much to heart that I shall not be alive a hundred years hence, in the reign of I cannot tell whom?

When Bickerstaff wrote his Essays,[62] I knew nothing of the subjects of them: nay, much later, and but the other day, as it were, in the beginning of the reign of George III, when Goldsmith, Johnson, Burke, used to meet at the Globe, when Garrick was in his glory, and Reynolds was over head and ears with his portraits, and Sterne brought out the volumes of *Tristram Shandy* year by year, it was without consulting me: I had not the slightest intimation of what was going on: the debates in the House of Commons on the American war, or the firing at Bunker's Hill, disturbed not me: yet I thought this no evil—I neither ate, drank, nor was merry, yet I did not complain: I had not then looked out into this breathing world, yet I was well; and the world did quite as well without me as I did without it! Why then should I make all this outcry about parting with it, and being no worse off than I was before? There is nothing in the recollection that at a certain time we were not come into the world, that "the gorge rises at"—why should we revolt at the idea that we must one day go out of it? To die is only to be as we were before we were born; yet no one feels any remorse or regret or repugnance in contemplating

[62] in the *Tatler* (Bickerstaff was Steele's early pseudonym).

this last idea. It is rather a relief and disburthening of the mind: it seems to have been holiday-time with us then: we were not called to appear upon the stage of life, to wear robes or tatters, to laugh or cry, be hooted or applauded; we had lain *perdus* [63] all this while, snug, out of harm's way; and had slept out our thousands of centuries without wanting to be waked up; at peace and free from care, in a long nonage, in a sleep deeper and calmer than that of infancy, wrapped in the softest and finest dust. And the worst that we dread is, after a short, fretful, feverish being, after vain hopes and idle fears, to sink to final repose again, and forget the troubled dream of life! . . . Ye armed men, knights-templars, that sleep in the stone aisles of that old Temple Church, where all is silent above, and where a deeper silence reigns below (not broken by the pealing organ), are ye not contented where ye lie? Or would you come out of your long homes to go to the Holy War? Or do ye complain that pain no longer visits you, that sickness has done its worst, that you have paid the last debt to nature, that you hear no more of the thickening phalanx of the foe, or your lady's waning love; and that while this ball of earth rolls its eternal round, no sound shall ever pierce through to disturb your lasting repose, fixed as the marble over your tombs, breathless as the grave that holds you! And thou, oh! thou, to whom my heart turns, and will turn while it has feeling left, who didst love in vain, and whose first was thy last sigh, wilt not thou too rest in peace (or wilt thou cry to me complaining from thy clay-cold bed) when that sad heart is no longer sad, and that sorrow is dead, which thou wert only called into the world to feel!

It is certain that there is nothing in the idea of a pre-existent state, that excites our longing like the prospect of a posthumous existence. We are satisfied to have begun life when we

[63] in ambush.

did; we have no ambition to have set out on our journey sooner; and feel that we have quite enough to do to battle our way through since. We cannot say,

> The wars we well remember of King Nine,
> Of old Assaracus and Inachus divine: [64]

neither have we any wish: we are contented to read of them in story, and to stand and gaze at the vast sea of time that separates us from them. It was early days then: the world was not *well-aired* enough for us: we have no inclination to have been up and stirring. We do not consider the six thousand years of the world before we were born as so much time lost to us: we are perfectly indifferent about the matter. We do not grieve and lament that we did not happen to be in time to see the grand mask and pageant of human life going on in all that period; though we are mortified at being obliged to quit our stand before the rest of the procession passes.

It may be suggested in explanation of this difference, that we know from various records and traditions what happened in the time of Queen Anne, or even in the reigns of the Assyrian monarchs: but that we have no means of ascertaining what is to happen hereafter but by awaiting the event, and that our eagerness and curiosity are sharpened in proportion as we are in the dark about it. This is not at all the case; for at that rate we should be constantly wishing to make a voyage of discovery to Greenland or to the Moon, neither of which we have, in general, the least desire to do. Neither, in truth, have we any particular solicitude to pry into the secrets of futurity, but as a pretext for prolonging our own existence. It is not so much that we care to be alive a hundred or a thousand years hence, any more than to have been alive a hundred or a thousand years ago: but the thing lies here, that we would all of us wish

[64] from the *Faery Queen*, Bk. II, Canto IX.

the present moment to last forever. We would be as we are, and would have the world remain just as it is, to please us.

> The present eye catches the present object [65]

to have and to hold while it may; and abhors, on any terms, to have it torn from us, and nothing left in its room. It is the pang of parting, the unloosing our grasp, the breaking asunder some strong tie, the leaving some cherished purpose unfulfilled, that creates the repugnance to go, and "makes calamity of so long life," as it often is.

> Oh! thou strong heart!
> There's such a covenant 'twixt the world and thee,
> They're loth to break! [66]

The love of life, then, is an habitual attachment, not an abstract principle. Simply *to be* does not "content man's natural desire": we long to be in a certain time, place, and circumstance. We would much rather be now, "on this bank and shoal of time," than have our choice of any future period, than take a slice of fifty or sixty years out of the Millennium, for instance. This shows that our attachment is not confined either to *being* or to *well-being;* but that we have an inveterate prejudice in favour of our immediate existence, such as it is. The mountaineer will not leave his rock, nor the savage his hut; neither are we willing to give up our present mode of life, with all its advantages and disadvantages, for any other that could be substituted for it. No man would, I think, exchange his existence with any other man, however fortunate. We had as lief *not be,* as *not be ourselves.* There are some persons of that reach of soul that they would like to live two hundred and fifty years hence, to see to what height of empire America will

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[65] from *Troilus and Cressida,* III, 3.
[66] from Webster's *The White Devil,* V, 1.

have grown up in that period, or whether the English Constitution will last so long. These are points beyond me. But I confess I should like to live to see the downfall of the Bourbons. That is a vital question with me; and I shall like it the better, the sooner it happens!

No young man ever thinks he shall die.[67] He may believe that others will, or assent to the doctrine that "all men are mortal" as an abstract proposition, but he is far enough from bringing it home to himself individually.[68] Youth, buoyant activity, and animal spirits hold absolute antipathy with old age as well as with death; nor have we, in the heyday of life, any more than in the thoughtlessness of childhood, the remotest conception how

> This sensible warm motion can become
> A kneaded clod [69]

nor how sanguine, florid health and vigour shall "turn to withered, weak, and grey." Or if in a moment of idle speculation we indulge in this notion of the close of life as a theory, it is amazing at what a distance it seems; what a long, leisurely interval there is between; what a contrast its slow and solemn approach affords to our present gay dreams of existence! We eye the farthest verge of the horizon, and think what a way we shall have to look back upon, ere we arrive at our journey's end; and without our in the least suspecting it, the mists are at our feet, and the shadows of age encompass us. The two divisions of our lives have melted into each other: the extreme points close and meet with none of that romantic interval stretching out between them, that we had reckoned upon; and for the rich, melancholy, solemn hues of age, "the sear, the

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[67] The sentiment, there attributed to his brother, with which Hazlitt begins the famous essay "On the Feeling of Immortality in Youth."

[68] "All men think all men mortal but themselves." Young. [Hazlitt's note.]

[69] from *Measure for Measure*, III, 1.

yellow leaf," the deepening shadows of an autumnal evening, we only feel a dank, cold mist encircling all objects, after the spirit of youth is fled. There is no inducement to look forward; and what is worse, little interest in looking back to what has become so trite and common. The pleasures of our existence have worn themselves out, are "gone into the wastes of time," or have turned their indifferent side to us: the pains by their repeated blows have worn us out, and have left us neither spirit nor inclination to encounter them again in retrospect. We do not want to rip up old grievances, nor to renew our youth like the phœnix, nor to live our lives twice over. Once is enough. As the tree falls, so let it lie. Shut up the book and close the account once for all!

It has been thought by some that life is like the exploring of a passage that grows narrower and darker the farther we advance, without a possibility of ever turning back, and where we are stifled for want of breath at last. For myself, I do not complain of the greater thickness of the atmosphere as I approach the *narrow house*. I felt it more formerly,[70] when the idea alone seemed to suppress a thousand rising hopes, and weighed upon the pulses of the blood. At present I rather feel a thinness and want of support, I stretch out my hand to some object and find none, I am too much in a world of abstraction; the naked map of life is spread out before me, and in the emptiness and desolation I see Death coming to meet me. In my youth I could not behold him for the crowd of objects and feelings, and Hope stood always between us, saying—"Never mind that old fellow!" If I had lived *indeed*, I should not care to die. But I do not like a contract of pleasure broken off unfulfilled, a marriage with joy unconsummated, a promise of happiness rescinded. My public and private hopes have been left a ruin,

[70] I remember, once in particular, having this feeling in reading Schiller's *Don Carlos*, where there is a description of death, in a degree that almost stifled me. [Hazlitt's note.]

or remain only to mock me. I would wish them to be re-edified. I should like to see some prospect of good to mankind, such as my life began with. I should like to leave some sterling work behind me. I should like to have some friendly hand to consign me to the grave. On these conditions I am ready, if not willing, to depart. I could then write on my tomb—GRATEFUL AND CONTENTED! But I have thought and suffered too much to be willing to have thought and suffered in vain! —In looking back, it sometimes appears to me as if I had in a manner slept out my life in a dream or shadow on the side of the hill of knowledge, where I have fed on books, on thoughts, on pictures, and only heard in half-murmurs the trampling of busy feet, or the noises of the throng below. Waked out of this dim, twilight existence, and startled with the passing scene, I have felt a wish to descend to the world of realities, and join in the chase. But I fear too late, and that I had better return to my bookish chimeras and indolence once more! *Zanetto, lascia le donne, e studia la matematica.*[71] I will think of it.

It is not wonderful that the contemplation and fear of death become more familiar to us as we approach nearer to it: that life seems to ebb with the decay of blood and youthful spirits; and that as we find every thing about us subject to chance and change, as our strength and beauty die, as our hopes and passions, our friends and our affections leave us, we begin by degrees to feel ourselves mortal!

I have never seen death but once, and that was in an infant. It is years ago. The look was calm and placid, and the face was fair and firm. It was as if a waxen image had been laid out in the coffin, and strewed with innocent flowers. It was not like death, but more like an image of life! No breath moved the lips, no pulse stirred, no sight or sound would enter those

[71] Zanetto, leave the ladies, and study mathematics (Rousseau's *Confessions*).

eyes or ears more. While I looked at it, I saw no pain was there; it seemed to smile at the short pang of life which was over: but I could not bear the coffin-lid to be closed—it seemed to stifle me; and still as the nettles wave in a corner of the churchyard over his little grave, the welcome breeze helps to refresh me and ease the tightness at my breast!

An ivory or marble image, like Chantry's monument of the two children,[72] is contemplated with pure delight. Why do we not grieve and fret that the marble is not alive, or fancy that it has a shortness of breath? It never was alive; and it is the difficulty of making the transition from life to death, the struggle between the two in our imagination, that confounds their properties painfully together, and makes us conceive that the infant that is but just dead, still wants to breathe, to enjoy, and look about it, and is prevented by the icy hand of death, locking up its faculties and benumbing its senses; so that, if it could, it would complain of its own hard state. Perhaps religious considerations reconcile the mind to this change sooner than any others, by representing the spirit as fled to another sphere, and leaving the body behind it. So in reflecting on death generally, we mix up the idea of life with it, and thus make it the ghastly monster it is. We think how we should feel, not how the dead feel.

> Still from the tomb the voice of nature cries;
> Even in our ashes live their wonted fires! [73]

There is an admirable passage on this subject in Tucker's *Light of Nature Pursued,* which I shall transcribe, as by much the best illustration I can offer of it.

"The melancholy appearance of a lifeless body, the mansion provided for it to inhabit, dark, cold, close and solitary, are

[72] in Litchfield Cathedral.
[73] from Gray's *Elegy.*

shocking to the imagination; but it is to the imagination only, not the understanding: for whoever consults this faculty will see at first glance, that there is nothing dismal in all these circumstances: if the corpse were kept wrapped up in a warm bed, with a roasting fire in the chamber, it would feel no comfortable warmth therefrom; were store of tapers lighted up as soon as day shuts in, it would see no objects to divert it; were it left at large, it would have no liberty, nor if surrounded with company, would be cheered thereby; neither are the distorted features expressions of pain, uneasiness, or distress. This every one knows, and will readily allow upon being suggested, yet still cannot behold, nor even cast a thought upon those objects without shuddering; for knowing that a living person must suffer grievously under such appearances, they become habitually formidable to the mind, and strike a mechanical horror, which is increased by the customs of the world around us."

There is usually one pang added voluntarily and unnecessarily to the fear of death, by our affecting to compassionate the loss which others will have in us. If that were all, we might reasonably set our minds at rest. The pathetic exhortation on country tomb-stones, "Grieve not for me, my wife and children dear," &c., is for the most part speedily followed to the letter. We do not leave so great a void in society as we are inclined to imagine, partly to magnify our own importance, and partly to console ourselves by sympathy. Even in the same family the gap is not so great: the wound closes up sooner than we should expect. Nay, *our room* is not infrequently thought better than *our company*. People walk along the streets the day after our deaths just as they did before, and the crowd is not diminished. While we were living, the world seemed in a manner to exist only for us, for our delight and amusement, because it contributed to them. But our hearts cease to beat, and it goes on as usual, and thinks no more about us than it did in our lifetime. The million are devoid of sentiment, and care as

little for you or me as if we belonged to the moon. We live the week over in the Sunday's paper, or are decently interred in some obituary at the month's end! It is not surprising that we are forgotten so soon after we quit this mortal stage: we are scarcely noticed, while we are on it. It is not merely that our names are not known in China—they have hardly been heard of in the next street. We are hand and glove with the universe, and think the obligation is mutual. This is an evident fallacy. If this, however, does not trouble us now, it will not hereafter. A handful of dust can have no quarrel to pick with its neighbours or complaint to make against Providence, and might well exclaim, if it had but an understanding and a tongue, "Go thy ways, old world; swing round in blue ether, voluble to every age, you and I shall no more jostle!"

It is amazing how soon the rich and titled, and even some of those who have wielded great political power, are forgotten:

> A little rule, a little sway,
> Is all the great and mighty have
> Betwixt the cradle and the grave [74]

and, after its short date, they hardly leave a name behind them. "A great man's memory may, at the common rate, survive him half a year." His heirs and successors take his titles, his power, and his wealth—all that made him considerable or courted by others; and he has left nothing else behind him either to delight or benefit the world. Posterity are not by any means so disinterested as they are supposed to be. They give their gratitude and admiration only in return for benefits conferred. They cherish the memory of those to whom they are indebted for instruction and delight; and they cherish it just in proportion to the instruction and delight they are conscious they receive. The sentiment of admiration springs immediately

[74] from Dyer's *Grongar Hill.*

from this ground; and cannot be otherwise than well-founded.[75]

The effeminate clinging to life as such, as a general or abstract idea, is the effect of a highly civilized and artificial state of society. Men formerly plunged into all the vicissitudes and dangers of war, or staked their all upon a single die, or some one passion, which, if they could not have gratified, life became a burthen to them—now our strongest passion is to think, our chief amusement is to read new plays, new poems, new novels, and this we may do at our leisure, in perfect security, *ad infinitum*. If we look into the old histories and romances, before the *belles-lettres* neutralized human affairs and reduced passion to a state of mental equivocation, we find the heroes and heroines not setting their lives "at a pin's fee," but rather courting opportunities of throwing them away in very wantonness of spirit. They raise their fondness for some favourite pursuit to its height, to a pitch of madness, and think no price too dear to pay for its full gratification. Every thing else is dross. They go to death as to a bridal bed, and sacrifice themselves or others without remorse at the shrine of love, of honour, of religion, or any other prevailing feeling. Romeo runs his "seasick, weary bark upon the rocks" of death, the instant he finds himself deprived of his Juliet; and she clasps his neck in their last agonies, and follows him to the same fatal shore. One strong idea takes possession of the mind and overrules every other; and even life itself, joyless without that, becomes an object of indifference or loathing. There is at least more of imagination in such a state of things, more vigour of feeling and promptitude to act, than in our lingering, languid, protracted attachment to life for its own poor sake. It is perhaps also

[75] It has been usual to raise a very unjust clamour against the enormous salaries of public singers, actors, and so on. This matter seems reducible to a *moral equation*. They are paid out of money raised by voluntary contributions in the strictest sense; and if they did not bring certain sums into the treasury, the Manager would not engage them. These sums are exactly in proportion to the number of individuals to whom their performance gives an extraordinary degree of pleasure. The talents of singer, actor, etc., are therefore worth just as much as they will fetch. [Hazlitt's note.]

better, as well as more heroical, to strike at some daring or darling object, and if we fail in that, to take the consequences manfully, than to renew the lease of a tedious, spiritless, charmless existence, merely (as Pierre says [76]) "to lose it afterwards in some vile brawl" for some worthless object. Was there not a spirit of martyrdom as well as a spice of the reckless energy of barbarism in this bold defiance of death? Had not religion something to do with it: the implicit belief in a future life, which rendered this of less value, and embodied something beyond it to the imagination; so that the rough soldier, the infatuated lover, the valorous knight, &c., could afford to throw away the present venture, and take a leap into the arms of futurity, which the modern sceptic shrinks back from, with all his boasted reason and vain philosophy, weaker than a woman! I cannot help thinking so myself; but I have endeavoured to explain this point before, and will not enlarge farther on it here.

A life of action and danger moderates the dread of death. It not only gives us fortitude to bear pain, but teaches us at every step the precarious tenure on which we hold our present being. Sedentary and studious men are the most apprehensive on this score. Dr. Johnson was an instance in point. A few years seemed to him soon over, compared with those sweeping contemplations on time and infinity with which he had been used to pose himself. In the *still-life* of a man of letters, there was no obvious reason for a change. He might sit in an armchair and pour out cups of tea to all eternity. Would it had been possible for him to do so! The most rational cure after all for the inordinate fear of death is to set a just value on life. If we merely wish to continue on the scene to indulge our headstrong humours and tormenting passions, we had better begone at once: and if we only cherish a fondness for existence according to the good we derive from it, the pang we feel at parting with it will not be very severe!

[76] in Otway's *Venice Preserved*, IV, 2.

On a Sun-Dial

To carve out dials quaintly, point by point.
SHAKESPEARE.

HORAS non numero nisi serenas—is the motto of a sun-dial near Venice. There is a softness and a harmony in the words and in the thought unparalleled. Of all conceits it is surely the most classical. "I count only the hours that are serene." What a bland and care-dispelling feeling! How the shadows seem to fade on the dial-plate as the sky lours, and time presents only a blank unless as its progress is marked by what is joyous, and all that is not happy sinks into oblivion! What a fine lesson is conveyed to the mind—to take no note of time but by its benefits, to watch only for the smiles and neglect the frowns of fate, to compose our lives of bright and gentle moments, turning always to the sunny side of things, and letting the rest slip from our imaginations, unheeded or forgotten! How different from the common art of self-tormenting! For myself, as I rode along the Brenta, while the sun shone hot upon its sluggish, slimy waves, my sensations were far from comfortable; but the reading this inscription on the side of a glaring wall in an instant restored me to myself; and still, whenever I think of or repeat it, it has the power of wafting me into the region of pure and blissful abstraction. I cannot help fancying it to be a legend of Popish superstition. Some monk of the dark ages must have invented and bequeathed it to us, who, loitering in trim gardens and watching the silent march of time, as his fruits ripened in the sun or his flowers scented the balmy air, felt a mild languor pervade his senses, and having little to do or to care for, determined (in imitation of his sun-dial) to efface that little from his thoughts or draw a veil over it, making of his life one long dream of quiet! *Horas non numero nisi serenas*—he might repeat, when the heavens were overcast and the gathering storm scattered the falling

leaves, and turn to his books and wrap himself in his golden studies! Out of some such mood of mind, indolent, elegant, thoughtful, this exquisite device (speaking volumes) must have originated.

Of the several modes of counting time, that by the sun-dial is perhaps the most apposite and striking, if not the most convenient or comprehensive. It does not obtrude its observations, though it "morals on the time," and, by its stationary character, forms a contrast to the most fleeting of all essences. It stands *sub dio*[77]—under the marble air, and there is some connection between the image of infinity and eternity. I should also like to have a sun-flower growing near it with bees fluttering round.[78] It should be of iron to denote duration, and have a dull, leaden look. I hate a sun-dial made of wood, which is rather calculated to show the variations of the seasons, than the progress of time, slow, silent, imperceptible, chequered with light and shade. If our hours were all serene, we might probably take almost as little note of them, as the dial does of those that are clouded. It is the shadow thrown across, that gives us warning of their flight. Otherwise, our impressions would take the same undistinguishable hue; we should scarce be conscious of our existence. Those who have had none of the cares of this life to harass and disturb them, have been obliged to have recourse to the hopes and fears of the next to vary the prospect before them. Most of the methods for measuring the lapse of time have, I believe, been the contrivance of monks and religious recluses, who, finding time hang heavy on their hands, were at some pains to see how they got rid of it. The hour-glass is, I suspect, an older invention; and it is certainly the most defective of all. Its creeping sands are not indeed an

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[77] under the sky.

[78] Is this a verbal fallacy? Or in the close, retired, sheltered scene which I have imagined to myself, is not the sun-flower a natural accompaniment of the sun-dial? [Hazlitt's note.]

unapt emblem of the minute, countless portions of our existence; and the manner in which they gradually slide through the hollow glass and diminish in number till not a single one is left, also illustrates the way in which our years slip from us by stealth: but as a mechanical invention, it is rather a hindrance than a help, for it requires to have the time, of which it pretends to count the precious moments, taken up in attention to itself, and in seeing that when one end of the glass is empty, we turn it round, in order that it may go on again, or else all our labour is lost, and we must wait for some other mode of ascertaining the time before we can recover our reckoning and proceed as before. The philosopher in his cell, the cottager at her spinning-wheel must, however, find an invaluable acquisition in this "companion of the lonely hour," as it has been called,[79] which not only serves to tell how the time goes, but to fill up its vacancies. What a treasure must not the little box seem to hold, as if it were a sacred deposit of the very grains and fleeting sands of life! What a business, in lieu of other more important avocations, to see it out to the last sand, and then to renew the process again on the instant, that there may not be the least flaw or error in the account! What a strong sense must be brought home to the mind of the value and irrecoverable nature of the time that is fled; what a thrilling, incessant consciousness of the slippery tenure by which we hold what remains of it! Our very existence must seem crumbling to atoms, and running down (without a miraculous reprieve) to the last fragment. "Dust to dust and ashes to ashes" is a text that might be fairly inscribed on an hour-glass: it is ordinarily associated with the scythe of Time and a Death's-head, as a *memento mori*[80]; and has, no doubt, furnished many

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[79] Once more, companion of the lonely hour,
I'll turn thee up again
Bloomfield's Poems—The Widow to her Hour-glass. [Hazlitt's note.]

[80] reminder of death.

a tacit hint to the apprehensive and visionary enthusiast in favour of a resurrection to another life!

The French give a different turn to things, less *sombre* and less edifying. A common and also a very pleasing ornament to a clock, in Paris, is a figure of Time seated in a boat which Cupid is rowing along, with the motto, *L'Amour fait passer le Temps* [81]—which the wits again have travestied into *Le Temps fait passer l'Amour.*[82] All this is ingenious and well; but it wants sentiment. I like a people who have something that they love and something that they hate, and with whom everything is not alike a matter of indifference or *pour passer le temps.*[83] The French attach no importance to anything, except for the moment; they are only thinking how they shall get rid of one sensation for another; all their ideas are *in transitu.*[84] Everything is detached, nothing is accumulated. It would be a million of years before a Frenchman would think of the *Horas non numero nisi serenas.* Its impassioned repose and *ideal* voluptuousness are as far from their breasts as the poetry of that line in Shakespeare—"How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!" They never arrive at the classical—or the romantic. They blow the bubbles of vanity, fashion, and pleasure; but they do not expand their perceptions into refinement, or strengthen them into solidity. Where there is nothing fine in the groundwork of the imagination, nothing fine in the superstructure can be produced. They are light, airy, fanciful (to give them their due)—but when they attempt to be serious (beyond mere good sense) they are either dull or extravagant. When the volatile salt has flown off, nothing but a *caput mortuum* [85] remains. They have infinite crotchets and caprices with their clocks and watches, which seem made for anything

[81] Love makes time pass.
[82] Time makes love pass.
[83] to pass the time.
[84] in transition.
[85] death's head.

but to tell the hour—gold repeaters, watches with metal covers, clocks with hands to count the seconds. There is no escaping from quackery and impertinence, even in our attempts to calculate the waste of time. The years gallop fast enough for me, without remarking every moment as it flies; and further, I must say I dislike a watch (whether of French or English manufacture) that comes to me like a footpad with its face muffled, and does not present its clear, open aspect like a friend, and point with its finger to the time of day. All this opening and shutting of dull, heavy cases (under pretence that the glass lid is liable to be broken, or lets in the dust or air and obstructs the movements of the watch), is not to husband time, but to give trouble. It is mere pomposity and self-importance, like consulting a mysterious oracle that one carries about with one in one's pocket, instead of asking a common question of an acquaintance or companion. There are two clocks which strike the hour in the room where I am. This I do not like. In the first place, I do not want to be reminded twice how the time goes (it is like the second tap of a saucy servant at your door when perhaps you have no wish to get up): in the next place, it is starting a difference of opinion on the subject, and I am averse to every appearance of wrangling and disputation. Time moves on the same, whatever disparity there may be in our mode of keeping count of it, li[k]e true fame in spite of the cavils and contradictions of the cri[t]ia- I am no friend to repeating watches. The only pleasant[a]u of tion I have with them is the account given by B[o]ise when some French lady, who sat up reading the *Nou*[v]the repeater, it first came out, and ordering her maid to so[m]ued reading on found it was too late to go to bed, and co[n]est excited by this till morning. Yet how different is the i[n] somewhere else gives story from the account which Rousse[au] ading romances, when a of his sitting up with his father swallows twittering in their boy, till they were startled by t[h]

nests at daybreak, and the father cried out, half angry and ashamed—"*Allons, mon fils; je suis plus enfant que toi!*" [86] In general, I have heard repeating watches sounded in stage-coaches at night, when some fellow-traveller suddenly awaking and wondering what was the hour, another has very deliberately taken out his watch, and pressing the spring, it has counted out the time; each petty stroke acting like a sharp puncture on the ear, and informing me of the dreary hours I had already passed, and of the more dreary ones I had to wait till morning.

The great advantage, it is true, which clocks have over watches and other dumb reckoners of time is, that for the most part they strike the hour—that they are as it were the mouth-pieces of time; that they not only point it to the eye, but impress it on the ear; that they "lend it both an understanding and a tongue." Time thus speaks to us in an audible and warning voice. Objects of sight are easily distinguished by the sense, and suggest useful reflections to the mind; sounds, from their intermittent nature, and perhaps other causes, appeal more to the imagination, and strike upon the heart. But to do this, they must be unexpected and involuntary—there must be no trick in the case—they should not be squeezed out with a finger and a thumb; there should be nothing optional, personal in their occurrence; they should be like stern, inflexible monitors, that nothing can prevent from discharging their duty. Surely, if there is anything with which we should not mix up our vanity and self-consequence, it is with Time, the most independent of all things. All the sublimity, all the superstition that hang upon this palpable mode of announcing its flight, are chiefly attached to this circumstance. Time would lose its abstracted character, if we kept it like a curiosity or a jack-in-a-box: its prophetic warnings would have no effect, if it obviously spoke only at our prompting like a paltry ventriloquism. The clock

[86] Well, my son: I am more of a child than you!

that tells the coming, dreaded hour—the castle bell, that "with its brazen throat and iron tongue, sounds *one* unto the drowsy ear of night"—the curfew, "swinging slow with sullen roar" o'er wizard stream or fountain, are like a voice from other worlds, big with unknown events. The last sound, which is still kept up as an old custom in many parts of England, is a great favourite with me. I used to hear it when a boy. It tells a tale of other times. The days that are past, the generations that are gone, the tangled forest glades and hamlets brown of my native country, the woodman's art, the Norman warrior armed for the battle or in his festive hall, the conqueror's iron rule and peasant's lamp extinguished, all start up at the clamorous peal, and fill my mind with fear and wonder. I confess, nothing at present interests me but what has been—the recollection of the impressions of my early life, or events long past, of which only the dim traces remain in a mouldering ruin or half-obsolete custom. That *things should be that are now no more,* creates in my mind the most unfeigned astonishment. I cannot solve the mystery of the past, nor exhaust my pleasure in it. The years, the generations to come, are nothing to me. We care no more about the world in the year 2300 than we do about one of the planets. We might as well make a voyage to the moon as think of stealing a march upon Time with impunity. *De non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio.*[87] Those who are to come after us and push us from the stage seem like upstarts and pretenders, that may be said to exist *in vacuo,* we know not upon what, except as they are blown up with vanity and self-conceit by their patrons among the moderns. But the ancients are true and *bona fide* people, to whom we are bound by aggregate knowledge and filial ties, and in whom, seen by the mellow light of history, we feel our own existence doubled and our pride consoled, as we ruminate on the

[87] Concerning things which are not seen and things which do not exist our feeling is the same.

vestiges of the past. The public in general, however, do not carry this speculative indifference about the future to what is to happen to themselves, or to the part they are to act in the busy scene. For my own part, I do; and the only wish I can form, or that ever prompts the passing sigh, would be to live some of my years over again—they would be those in which I enjoyed and suffered most!

The ticking of a clock in the night has nothing very interesting nor very alarming in it, though superstition has magnified it into an omen. In a state of vigilance or debility, it preys upon the spirits like the persecution of a teasing, pertinacious insect; and haunting the imagination after it has ceased in reality, is converted into the death-watch. Time is rendered vast by contemplating its minute portions thus repeatedly and painfully urged upon its attention, as the ocean in its immensity is composed of water-drops. A clock striking with a clear and silver sound is a great relief in such circumstances, breaks the spell, and resembles a sylph-like and friendly spirit in the room. Foreigners with all their tricks and contrivances upon clocks and time-pieces, are strangers to the sound of village bells, though perhaps a people that can dance may dispense with them. They impart a pensive, wayward pleasure to the mind, and are a kind of chronology of happy events, often serious in the retrospect—births, marriages, and so forth. Coleridge calls them "the poor man's only music." A village spire in England peeping from its cluster of trees, is always associated in imagination with this cheerful accompaniment, and may be expected to pour its joyous tidings on the gale. In Catholic countries, you are stunned with the everlasting tolling of bells to prayers or for the dead. In the Apennines, and other wild and mountainous districts of Italy, the little chapel-bell with its simple tinkling sound has a romantic and charming effect. The monks in former times appear to have taken a pride in

the construction of bells as well as churches; and some of those of the great cathedrals abroad (as at Cologne and Rouen) may be fairly said to be hoarse with counting the flight of ages. The chimes in Holland are a nuisance. They dance in the hours and the quarters. They leave no respite to the imagination. Before one set has done ringing in your ears, another begins. You do not know whether the hours move or stand still, go backwards or forwards, so fantastical and perplexing are their accompaniments. Time is a more staid personage, and not so full of gambols. It puts you in mind of a tune with variations, or of an embroidered dress. Surely, nothing is more simple than Time. His march is straightforward; but we should have leisure allowed us to look back upon the distance we have come, and not be counting his steps every moment. Time in Holland is a foolish old fellow with all the antics of a youth, who "goes to church in a coranto, and lights his pipe in a cinque-pace." The chimes with us, on the contrary, as they come in every three or four hours, are like stages in the journey of the day. They give a fillip to the lazy, creeping hours, and relieve the lassitude of country-places. At noon, their desultory, trivial song is diffused through the hamlet with the odour of rashers of bacon; at the close of day they send the toil-worn sleepers to their beds. Their discontinuance would be a great loss to the thinking or unthinking public. Mr. Wordsworth has painted their effect on the mind when he makes his friend Matthew, in a fit of inspired dotage,

> Sing those witty rhymes
> About the crazy old church-clock
> And the bewilder'd chimes.

The tolling of the bell for deaths and executions is a fearful summons, though, as it announces, not the advance of time but the approach of fate, it happily makes no part of our subject.

Otherwise, the "sound of the bell" for Macheath's execution in the *Beggar's Opera*,[88] or for that of the Conspirators in *Venice Preserved*,[89] with the roll of the drum at a soldier's funeral, and a digression to that of my Uncle Toby, as it is so finely described by Sterne,[90] would furnish ample topics to descant upon. If I were a moralist, I might disapprove the ringing in the new and ringing out the old year.

Why dance ye, mortals, o'er the grave of Time?

St. Paul's bell tolls only for the death of our English kings, or a distinguished personage or two, with long intervals between.[91]

Those who have no artificial means of ascertaining the progress of time, are in general the most acute in discerning its immediate signs, and are most retentive of individual dates. The mechanical aids to knowledge are not sharpeners of the wits. The understanding of a savage is a kind of natural almanac, and more true in its prognostication of the future. In his mind's eye he sees what has happened or what is likely to happen to him, "as in a map the voyager his course." Those who read the times and seasons in the aspect of the heavens and the configuration of the stars, who count by moons and know when the sun rises and sets, are by no means ignorant of their own affairs or of the common concatenation of events. People in such situations have not their faculties distracted by any multiplicity of inquiries beyond what befalls themselves, and the outward appearances that mark the change. There is, therefore, a simplicity and clearness in the knowledge they possess, which often puzzles the more learned. I am sometimes surprised at a shepherd-boy by the road-side, who sees nothing

[88] by John Gay.
[89] by Thomas Otway.
[90] in *Tristram Shandy*.
[91] Rousseau has admirably described the effect of bells on the imagination in a passage in the *Confessions*, beginning, *"Le son des cloches m'a toujours singulièrement affecté"* etc. [Hazlitt's note.]

but the earth and sky, asking me the time of day—he ought to know so much better than any one how far the sun is above the horizon. I suppose he wants to ask a question of a passenger, or to see if he has a watch. Robinson Crusoe lost his reckoning in the monotony of his life and that bewildering dream of solitude, and was fain to have recourse to the notches in a piece of wood. What a diary was his! And how time must have spread its circuit round him, vast and pathless as the ocean!

For myself, I have never had a watch nor any other mode of keeping time in my possession, nor ever wish to learn how time goes. It is a sign I have had little to do, few avocations, few engagements. When I am in a town, I can hear the clock; and when I am in the country, I can listen to the silence. What I like best is to lie whole mornings on a sunny bank on Salisbury Plain, without any object before me, neither knowing nor caring how time passes, and thus "with light-winged toys of feathered Idleness" to melt down hours to moments. Perhaps some such thoughts as I have here set down float before me like motes before my half-shut eyes, or some vivid image of the past by forcible contrast rushes by me—"Diana and her fawn, and all the glories of the antique world"; then I start away to prevent the iron from entering my soul, and let fall some tears into that stream of time which separates me farther and farther from all I once loved! At length I rouse myself from my reverie, and home to dinner, proud of killing time with thought, nay even without thinking. Somewhat of this idle humour I inherit from my father, though he had not the same freedom from *ennui*, for he was not a metaphysician; and there were stops and vacant intervals in his being which he did not know how to fill up. He used in these cases, and as an obvious resource, carefully to wind up his watch at night, and "with lack-lustre eye" more than once in the course of the day look to see what o'clock it was. Yet he had nothing else in his char-

acter in common with the elder Mr. Shandy.[92] Were I to attempt a sketch of him, for my own or the reader's satisfaction, it would be after the following manner——But now I recollect I have done something of the kind once before,[93] and were I to resume the subject here, some bat or owl of a critic, with spectacled gravity, might swear I had stolen the whole of this Essay from myself—or (what is worse) from him! So I had better let it go as it is.

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[92] cf. note 8, p. 272.
[93] in the essay "My First Acquaintance with Poets."

Lamb

Lamb

(1775-1834)

The finest of English essayists and the most beloved of English writers—both titles are awarded Charles Lamb with as little disagreement as there is about anything in literary criticism. His life, save for one episode, was thoroughly uneventful: a clerk, for most of his life in the employ of a single firm; and "an author by fits," doing his writing in his spare hours. The one event was the sudden violent outburst of madness in his sister Mary, who fatally stabbed their mother. For the rest of his life Lamb made himself responsible for the care of his sister so that she would not be confined in an asylum, renouncing for himself the thought of wife and children. The hereditary taint of insanity hung over Charles too, but one will look in vain through his writing for any reflection of it, or any reference to the tragedy that darkened his life.

Lamb's fame rests for the most part on one small book: the *Essays of Elia* and the *Last Essays of Elia* together form but a slender volume. He discovered the thing he was fitted to do perfectly, the familiar essay, relatively late. His earlier efforts in poetry, the novel, and the drama are disappointing; previous to the *Elia* essays it is only in the *Tales from Shakespeare*, done in collaboration with Mary, and in his *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*, that Lamb shows to real advantage. The latter book established him as a critic of first rank, a writer of acute sensibilities and finely discriminating taste. But his highest distinction was still to come. When the *Essays of Elia* began to appear in the *London Magazine* it was evident that a personal essayist had appeared who could hold his own even in the brilliant company of Hazlitt and De Quincey. Lamb, in the opinion of most readers, does even more than that. He is *the* personal essayist *par excellence* in that he has the most lovable of personalities to reveal, and supreme genius in the manner of the revelation.

This is not to say that Lamb speaks as he suggests the owners of Caledonian faculties do, "always as if they were upon their oath." We need not, for example, take his attitude toward music in "A Chapter on Ears" quite literally, nor imagine that the account he gives of his "intellectual wardrobe" in "The Old and the New Schoolmaster" does him entire justice. Likewise, many of the names he mentions—Alice

W—n, Mrs. Battle, Cousin Bridget, James Elia, for example—are aliases. All this, however, does not at all suggest the slightest taint of insincerity or untruthfulness in him, nor lessen his claim to be called the most personal of writers. When he veils the literal truth, we know it is better thus; so firmly has he convinced us of both his tact and wisdom.

For Lamb has both great tact and taste, and great wisdom besides. The wisdom, perhaps, is less easily perceived than the other gifts. It is his habit to say a weighty thing lightly, even jestingly. "His jests scald like tears," says Hazlitt, "and he probes a question with a play upon words." "He would interrupt the gravest discussion with some light jest;"—so the "friend of the late Elia" tells us—"and yet, perhaps, not quite irrelevant, in ears that could understand it." These things are true not only of his conversation but of his writing, for both are the authentic revelation of the man. Surely Lamb might say, with Montaigne, "My book and I go hand in hand . . . who touches the one, touches the other." Appreciation of the book must imply appreciation and understanding of the man. The wide range of the *Elia* essays, from the burlesque of "A Chapter on Ears" to the infinite pathos of "Dream Children," is not wider than the range of their author's sympathies—sympathies that are "imperfect" but as human nature is imperfect. Such traits as his preference for old things,—old china, old books, old faces—and his penchant for the odd and the quaint, in men and in authors, seem less limitations than marks of his abounding humanity.

An introduction to Lamb seems particularly futile. For one thing, as he himself felt, "The essays want no Preface: they are *all preface*. A Preface is nothing but a talk with the reader; and they do nothing else." Besides, it is well to remember Swinburne's warning: "Nobody can do justice to his work who does not love it too well to feel himself capable of giving judgment on it." Perhaps the most satisfactory summary of the man and the book—certainly not an overvaluation of the book and scarcely of the man—is the verdict of a contemporary, De Quincey: "Considered as a man of genius, he was not in the very first rank, simply because his range was a contracted one: within that range, he was perfect; of the peculiar powers which he possessed, he has left to the world as exquisite a specimen as this planet is likely to exhibit. But, as a *moral* being, in the total compass of his relations to this world's duties, in the largeness and diffusiveness of his charity . . . I am disposed, after a deliberate review of my own entire experience, to pronounce him the best man, the nearest in his approaches to an ideal standard of excellence, that I have ever known or read of."

The Two Races of Men

THE human species, according to the best theory I can form of it, is composed of two distinct races, *the men who borrow,* and *the men who lend.* To these two original diversities may be reduced all those impertinent classifications of Gothic and Celtic tribes, white men, black men, red men. All the dwellers upon earth, "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites," flock hither, and do naturally fall in with one or other of these primary distinctions. The infinite superiority of the former, which I choose to designate as the *great race,* is discernible in their figure, port, and a certain instinctive sovereignty. The latter are born degraded. "He shall serve his brethren." There is something in the air of one of this cast, lean and suspicious; contrasting with the open, trusting, generous manner of the other.

Observe who have been the greatest borrowers of all ages —Alcibiades—Falstaff—Sir Richard Steele—our late incomparable Brinsley [1]—what a family likeness in all four!

What a careless, even deportment hath your borrower! what rosy gills! what a beautiful reliance on Providence doth he manifest,—taking no more thought than lilies! What contempt for money,—accounting it (yours and mine especially) no better than dross! What a liberal confounding of those pedantic distinctions of *meum* and *tuum* [2]*!* or rather, what a noble simplification of language (beyond Tooke),[3] resolving these supposed opposites into one clear, intelligible pronoun adjective!—What near approaches doth he make to the primitive *community,*—to the extent of one-half of the principle at least!—

He is the true taxer who "calleth all the world up to be taxed"; and the distance is as vast between him and *one of*

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[1] Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the famous dramatist.
[2] mine and thine.
[3] John Horne Tooke, politician and grammarian.

us, as subsisted betwixt the Augustan Majesty and the poorest obolary Jew [4] that paid it tribute-pittance at Jerusalem!—His exactions, too, have such a cheerful, voluntary air! So far removed from your sour parochial or state-gatherers,—those ink-horn varlets, who carry their want of welcome in their faces! He cometh to you with a smile, and troubleth you with no receipt; confining himself to no set season. Every day is his Candlemas, or his Feast of Holy Michael.[5] He applieth the *lene tormentum* [6] of a pleasant look to your purse,—which to that gentle warmth expands her silken leaves, as naturally as the cloak of the traveller, for which sun and wind contended! He is the true Propontic which never ebbeth! The sea which taketh handsomely at each man's hand. In vain the victim, whom he delighteth to honour, struggles with destiny; he is in the net. Lend therefore cheerfully, O man ordained to lend —that thou lose not in the end, with thy worldly penny, the reversion promised. Combine not preposterously in thine own person the penalties of Lazarus and of Dives! [7]—but, when thou seest the proper authority coming, meet it smilingly, as it were half-way. Come, a handsome sacrifice! See how light *he* makes of it! Strain not courtesies with a noble enemy.

Reflections like the foregoing were forced upon my mind by the death of my old friend, Ralph Bigod,[8] Esq., who departed this life on Wednesday evening; dying, as he had lived, without much trouble. He boasted himself a descendant from mighty ancestors of that name, who heretofore held ducal dignities in this realm. In his actions and sentiments he belied not the stock to which he pretended. Early in life he found himself invested with ample revenues; which, with that noble disinter-

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[4] Jew who paid an obolus (a very small coin).
[5] Candlemas and Michaelmas are, respectively, Scotch and English quarter-days, on which payments are frequently due.
[6] gentle stimulus.
[7] cf. *Luke* XVI, 19-26.
[8] the essayist's name for a friend, John Fenwick.

estedness which I have noticed as inherent in men of the *great race,* he took almost immediate measures entirely to dissipate and bring to nothing: for there is something revolting in the idea of a king holding a private purse; and the thoughts of Bigod were all regal. Thus furnished, by the very act of disfurnishment; getting rid of the cumbersome luggage of riches, more apt (as one sings)

> To slacken virtue, and abate her edge,
> Than prompt her to do aught may merit praise,[9]

he set forth, like some Alexander, upon his great enterprise, "borrowing and to borrow!"

In his periegesis,[10] or triumphant progress throughout this island, it has been calculated that he laid a tithe part of the inhabitants under contribution. I reject this estimate as greatly exaggerated:—but having had the honour of accompanying my friend, divers times, in his perambulations about this vast city, I own I was greatly struck at first with the prodigious number of faces we met, who claimed a sort of respectful acquaintance with us. He was one day so obliging as to explain the phenomenon. It seems, these were his tributaries; feeders of his exchequer; gentlemen, his good friends (as he was pleased to express himself), to whom he had occasionally been beholden for a loan. Their multitudes did no way disconcert him. He rather took a pride in numbering them; and, with Comus, seemed pleased to be "stocked with so fair a herd."

With such sources, it was a wonder how he contrived to keep his treasury always empty. He did it by force of an aphorism, which he had often in his mouth, that "money kept longer than three days stinks." So he made use of it while it was fresh. A good part he drank away (for he was an excellent toss-pot), some he gave away, the rest he threw away, literally

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[9] from *Paradise Regained.*
[10] journey round.

tossing and hurling it violently from him—as boys do burrs, or as if it had been infectious,—into ponds or ditches, or deep holes,—inscrutable cavities of the earth;—or he would bury it (where he would never seek it again) by a river's side under some bank, which (he would facetiously observe) paid no interest—but out away from him it must go peremptorily, as Hagar's offspring into the wilderness, while it was sweet. He never missed it. The streams were perennial which fed his fisc.[11] When new supplies became necessary, the first person that had the felicity to fall in with him, friend or stranger, was sure to contribute to the deficiency. For Bigod had an *undeniable* way with him. He had a cheerful, open exterior, a quick jovial eye, a bald forehead, just touched with grey (*cana fides*).[12] He anticipated no excuse, and found none. And, waiving for a while my theory as to the *great race,* I would put it to the most untheorising reader, who may at times have disposable coin in his pocket, whether it is not more repugnant to the kindliness of his nature to refuse such a one as I am describing, than to say *no* to a poor petitionary rogue (your bastard borrower), who, by his mumping visnomy,[13] tells you that he expects nothing better; and, therefore, whose preconceived notions and expectations you do in reality so much less shock in the refusal.

When I think of this man; his fiery glow of heart; his swell of feeling; how magnificent, how *ideal* he was; how great at the midnight hour; and when I compare with him the companions with whom I have associated since, I grudge the saving of a few idle ducats, and think that I am fallen into the society of *lenders,* and *little men.*

To one like Elia, whose treasures are rather cased in leather covers than closed in iron coffers, there is a class of alienators

[11] exchequer, purse.
[12] hoary honor.
[13] sulky countenance.

more formidable than that which I have touched upon; I mean your *borrowers of books*—those mutilators of collections, spoilers of the symmetry of shelves, and creators of odd volumes. There is Comberbatch,[14] matchless in his depredations!

That foul gap in the bottom shelf facing you, like a great eye-tooth knocked out—(you are now with me in my little back study in Bloomsbury, reader!)—with the huge Switzer-like[15] tomes on each side (like the Guildhall giants, in their reformed posture, guardant of nothing[16]) once held the tallest of my folios, *Opera Bonaventuræ,* choice and massy divinity, to which its two supporters (school[17] divinity also, but of a lesser calibre,—Bellarmine, and Holy Thomas[18]) showed but as dwarfs,—itself an Ascapart![19]—*that* Comberbatch abstracted upon the faith of a theory he holds, which is more easy, I confess, for me to suffer by than to refute, namely, that "the title to property in a book (my Bonaventure, for instance), is in exact ratio to the claimant's powers of understanding and appreciating the same." Should he go on acting upon this theory, which of our shelves is safe?

The slight vacuum in the left hand case—two shelves from the ceiling—scarcely distinguishable but by the quick eye of a loser——was whilom the commodious resting-place of Browne on Urn Burial. C. will hardly allege that he knows more about that treatise than I do, who introduced it to him, and was indeed the first (of the moderns) to discover its beauties—but so have I known a foolish lover to praise his mistress in the presence of a rival more qualified to carry her off than himself.—Just below, Dodsley's dramas[20] want their fourth volume, where

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[14] Coleridge, who once enlisted under this name.
[15] very large.
[16] The statues formerly at the entrance of the Guildhall had been moved to a position beside one of the windows.
[17] scholastic.
[18] St. Thomas Acquinas.
[19] the giant that appears in the romance of Bevis of Hampton.
[20] a collection of old plays.

Vittoria Corombona[21] is! The remainder nine are as distasteful as Priam's refuse sons,[22] when the Fates *borrowed* Hector. Here stood the *Anatomy of Melancholy,* in sober state.—There loitered *The Complete Angler;* quiet as in life, by some stream side.—In yonder nook, *John Buncle,*[23] a widower-volume, with "eyes closed," mourns his ravished mate.

One justice I must do my friend, that if he sometimes, like the sea, sweeps away a treasure, at another time, sea-like, he throws up as rich an equivalent to match it. I have a small under-collection of this nature (my friend's gatherings in his various calls), picked up, he has forgotten at what odd places, and deposited with as little memory at mine. I take in these orphans, the twice-deserted. These proselytes of the gate[24] are welcome as the true Hebrews. There they stand in conjunction; natives, and naturalised. The latter seemed as little disposed to inquire out their true lineage as I am.—I charge no warehouse-room for these deodands,[25] nor shall ever put myself to the ungentlemanly trouble of advertising a sale of them to pay expenses.

To lose a volume to C. carries some sense and meaning in it. You are sure that he will make one hearty meal on your viands, if he can give no account of the platter after it. But what moved thee, wayward, spiteful K.,[26] to be so importunate to carry off with thee, in spite of tears and adjurations to thee to forbear, the *Letters* of that princely woman, the thrice noble Margaret Newcastle[27]?—knowing at the time, and knowing that I knew also, thou most assuredly wouldst never turn over one

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[21] otherwise, *The White Devil,* by John Webster.
[22] After Achilles slew Hector, but nine of Priam's fifty sons remained alive.
[23] by Thomas Amory.
[24] aliens converted to Judaism.
[25] in legal parlance, articles which, having caused the death of someone, are forfeited to charitable uses.
[26] James Kenney, a playwright, then living in France.
[27] the first Duchess of Newcastle.

leaf of the illustrious folio:—what but the mere spirit of contradiction, and childish love of getting the better of thy friend? —Then, worst cut of all! to transport it with thee to the Gallican land—

> Unworthy land to harbour such a sweetness,
> A virtue in which all ennobling thoughts dwelt,
> Pure thoughts, kind thoughts, high thoughts, her sex's wonder! [28]

—hadst thou not thy play-books, and books of jests and fancies, about thee, to keep thee merry, even as thou keepest all companies with thy quips and mirthful tales?—Child of the Green-room, it was unkindly done of thee. Thy wife, too, that part-French, better-part Englishwoman!—that *she* could fix upon no other treatise to bear away in kindly token of remembering us, than the works of Fulke Greville, Lord Brook—of which no Frenchman, nor woman of France, Italy, or England, was ever by nature constituted to comprehend a tittle! *Was there not Zimmerman on Solitude?*

Reader, if haply thou art blessed with a moderate collection, be shy of showing it; or if thy heart overfloweth to lend them, lend thy books; but let it be to such a one as S. T. C.—he will return them (generally anticipating the time appointed) with usury; enriched with annotations, tripling their value. I have had experience. Many are these precious MSS. of his—(in *matter* oftentimes, and almost in *quantity* not infrequently, vying with the originals)—in no very clerkly hand—legible in my Daniel; in old Burton; in Sir Thomas Browne; and those abstruser cogitations of the Greville, now, alas! wandering in Pagan lands—I counsel thee, shut not thy heart, nor thy library, against S. T. C.

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[28] These lines are probably by Lamb himself.

Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist

"A CLEAR fire, a clean hearth,[29] and the rigour of the game." This was the celebrated *wish* of old Sarah Battle (now with God), who, next to her devotions, loved a good game of whist. She was none of your lukewarm gamesters, your half-and-half players, who have no objection to take a hand, if you want one to make up a rubber; who affirm that they have no pleasure in winning; that they like to win one game and lose another; that they can while away an hour very agreeably at a card-table, but are indifferent whether they play or no; and will desire an adversary, who has slipped a wrong card, to take it up and play another.[30] These insufferable trifiers are the curse of a table. One of these flies will spoil a whole pot. Of such it may be said that they do not play at cards, but only play at playing at them.

Sarah Battle was none of that breed. She detested them, as I do, from her heart and soul, and would not, save upon a striking emergency, willingly seat herself at the same table with them. She loved a thorough-paced partner, a determined enemy. She took, and gave, no concessions. She hated favours. She never made a revoke, nor ever passed it over in her adversary without exacting the utmost forfeiture. She fought a good fight: cut and thrust. She held not her good sword (her cards) "like a dancer." She sate bolt upright; and neither showed you her cards, nor desired to see yours. All people have their blind side—their superstitions; and I have heard her declare, under the rose,[31] that Hearts was her favourite suit.

I never in my life—and I knew Sarah Battle many of the best years of it—saw her take out her snuff-box when it was

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[29] This was before the introduction of rugs, reader. You must remember the intolerable crash of the unswept cinders betwixt your foot and the marble. [Lamb's note.]

[30] As if a sportsman should tell you he liked to kill a fox one day and lose him the next. [Lamb's note.]

[31] in confidence.

her turn to play; or snuff a candle in the middle of a game; or ring for a servant, till it was fairly over. She never introduced, or connived at, miscellaneous conversation during its process. As she emphatically observed, cards were cards; and if I ever saw unmingled distaste in her fine last-century countenance, it was at the airs of a young gentleman of a literary turn, who had been with difficulty persuaded to take a hand; and who, in his excess of candour, declared, that he thought there was no harm in unbending the mind now and then, after serious studies, in recreations of that kind! She could not bear to have her noble occupation, to which she wound up her faculties, considered in that light. It was her business, her duty, the thing she came into the world to do—and she did it. She unbent her mind afterwards—over a book.

Pope was her favourite author: his Rape of the Lock her favourite work. She once did me the favour to play over with me (with the cards) his celebrated game of Ombre in that poem; and to explain to me how far it agreed with, and in what points it would be found to differ from, tradrille. Her illustrations were apposite and poignant; and I had the pleasure of sending the substance of them to Mr. Bowles,[32] but I suppose they came too late to be inserted among his ingenious notes upon that author.

Quadrille, she has often told me, was her first love; but whist had engaged her maturer esteem. The former, she said, was showy and specious, and likely to allure young persons. The uncertainty and quick shifting of partners—a thing which the constancy of whist abhors; the dazzling supremacy and regal investiture of Spadille[33]—absurd, as she justly observed, in the pure aristocracy of whist, where his crown and garter give him no proper power above his brother-nobility of the Aces:—the giddy vanity, so taking to the inexperienced, of playing alone;

[32] whose edition of Pope appeared in 1807.
[33] ace of spades in quadrille (and ombre).

above all, the overpowering attractions of a *Sans Prendre Vole* [34] —to the triumph of which there is certainly nothing parallel or approaching in the contingencies of whist;—all these, she would say, make quadrille a game of captivation to the young and enthusiastic. But whist was the *solider* game; that was her word. It was a long meal; not like quadrille, a feast of snatches. One or two rubbers might co-extend in duration with an evening. They gave time to form rooted friendships, to cultivate steady enmities. She despised the chance-started, capricious, and ever fluctuating alliances of the other. The skirmishes of quadrille, she would say, reminded her of the petty ephemeral embroilments of the little Italian states, depicted by Machiavel; perpetually changing postures and connections; kissing and scratching in a breath:—but the wars of whist were comparable to the long, steady, deep-rooted, rational antipathies of the great French and English nations.

A grave simplicity was what she chiefly admired in her favourite game. There was nothing silly in it, like the nob [35] in cribbage—nothing superfluous. No *flushes*—that most irrational of all pleas that a reasonable being can set up:—that anyone should claim four by virtue of holding cards of the same mark and colour, without reference to the playing of the game, or the individual worth or pretensions of the cards themselves! She held this to be a solecism; as pitiful an ambition at cards as alliteration is in authorship. She despised superficiality, and looked deeper than the colours of things. Suits were soldiers, she would say, and must have an uniformity of array to distinguish them: but what should we say to a foolish squire, who should claim a merit from dressing up his tenantry in red jackets, that never were to be marshalled—never to take the field? She even wished that whist were more simple than it is; and, in my mind, would have stripped it of some appendages,

[34] "playing alone" and taking all the tricks.
[35] scoring a point by merely holding the jack of trumps.

which, in the state of human frailty, may be venially, and even commendably, allowed of. She saw no reason for the deciding of the trump by the turn of the card. Why not one suit always trumps? Why two colours, when the mark of the suit would have sufficiently distinguished them without it?

"But the eye, my dear madam, is agreeably refreshed with the variety. Man is not a creature of pure reason—he must have his senses delightfully appealed to. We see it in Roman Catholic countries, where the music and the paintings draw in many to worship, whom your Quaker spirit of unsensualizing would have kept out. You yourself have a pretty collection of paintings—but confess to me, whether, walking in your gallery at Sandham, among those clear Vandykes, or among the Paul Potters in the ante-room, you ever felt your bosom glow with an elegant delight, at all comparable to *that* you have it in your power to experience most evenings over a well-arranged assortment of the court-cards?—the pretty antic habits, like heralds in a procession—the gay triumph-assuring scarlets—the contrasting deadly-killing sables—the 'hoary majesty of spades'—Pam [36] in all his glory!

"All these might be dispensed with; and with their naked names upon the drab pasteboard, the game might go on very well, pictureless. But the *beauty* of cards would be extinguished for ever. Stripped of all that is imaginative in them, they must degenerate into mere gambling. Imagine a dull deal board, or drum head, to spread them on, instead of that nice verdant carpet (next to nature's), fittest arena for those courtly combatants to play their gallant jousts and tourneys in! Exchange those delicately-turned ivory markers—(work of Chinese artist, unconscious of their symbol,—or as profanely slighting their true application as the arrantest Ephesian journeyman that turned out those little shrines for the goddess)—exchange them

[36] the jack of clubs.

for little bits of leather (our ancestors' money), or chalk and a slate!"

The old lady, with a smile, confessed the soundness of my logic; and to her approbation of my arguments on her favourite topic that evening, I have always fancied myself indebted for the legacy of a curious cribbage-board, made of the finest Sienna marble, which her maternal uncle (old Walter Plumer, whom I have elsewhere celebrated) [37] brought with him from Florence:—this, and a trifle of five hundred pounds, came to me at her death.

The former bequest (which I do not least value) I have kept with religious care; though she herself, to confess a truth, was never greatly taken with cribbage. It was an essentially vulgar game, I have heard her say,—disputing with her uncle, who was very partial to it. She would never heartily bring her mouth to pronounce *"Go,"* or *"That's a go."* She called it an ungrammatical game. The pegging teased her. I once knew her to forfeit a rubber (a five-dollar [38] stake) because she would not take advantage of the turn-up knave, which would have given it her, but which she must have claimed by the disgraceful tenure of declaring *"two for his heels."* There is something extremely genteel in this sort of self-denial. Sarah Battle was a gentlewoman born.

Piquet she held the best game at the cards for two persons, though she would ridicule the pedantry of the terms—such as pique—repique—the capot—they savoured (she thought) of affectation. But games for two, or even three, she never greatly cared for. She loved the quadrate or square. She would argue thus:—Cards are warfare: the ends are gain, with glory. But cards are war, in disguise of a sport: when single adversaries encounter, the ends proposed are too palpable. By themselves, it is too close a fight; with spectators, it is not much bettered.

[37] in "The South Sea House."
[38] five crown.

No looker-on can be interested, except for a bet, and then it is a mere affair of money; he cares not for your luck *sympathetically,* or for your play. Three are still worse; a mere naked war of every man against every man, as in cribbage, without league or alliance; or a rotation of petty and contradictory interests, a succession of heartless leagues, and not much more hearty infractions of them, as in tradrille. But in square games (*she meant whist*), all that is possible to be attained in card-playing is accomplished. There are the incentives of profit with honour, common to every species—though the *latter* can be but very imperfectly enjoyed in those other games, where the spectator is only feebly a participator. But the parties in whist are spectators and principals too. They are a theatre to themselves, and a looker-on is not wanted. He is rather worse than nothing, and an impertinence. Whist abhors neutrality, or interests beyond its sphere. You glory in some surprising stroke of skill or fortune, not because a cold—or even an interested—bystander witnesses it, but because your *partner* sympathizes in the contingency. You win for two, you triumph for two. Two are exalted. Two again are mortified; which divides their disgrace, as the conjunction doubles (by taking off the invidiousness) your glories. Two losing to two are better reconciled, than one to one in that close butchery. The hostile feeling is weakened by multiplying the channels. War becomes a civil game. By such reasonings as these the old lady was accustomed to defend her favourite pastime.

No inducement could ever prevail upon her to play at any game, where chance entered into the composition, *for nothing.* Chance, she would argue—and here, again, admire the subtlety of her conclusion;—chance is nothing, but where something else depends upon it. It is obvious that cannot be *glory.* What rational cause of exultation could it give to a man to turn up size ace a hundred times together by himself, or before spectators, where no stake was depending? Make a lottery of

a hundred thousand tickets with but one fortunate number, and what possible principle of our nature, except stupid wonderment, could it gratify to gain that number as many times successively without a prize? Therefore she disliked the mixture of chance in backgammon, where it was not played for money. She called it foolish, and those people idiots, who were taken with a lucky hit under such circumstances. Games of pure skill were as little to her fancy. Played for a stake, they were a mere system of over-reaching. Played for glory, they were a mere setting of one man's wit—his memory, or combination-faculty rather—against another's; like a mock-engagement at a review, bloodless and profitless. She could not conceive a game wanting the spritely infusion of chance, the handsome excuses of good fortune. Two people playing at chess in a corner of a room, whilst whist was stirring in the centre, would inspire her with insufferable horror and ennui. Those well-cut similitudes of Castles and Knights, the *imagery* of the board, she would argue (and I think in this case justly), were entirely misplaced and senseless. Those hard-head contests can in no instance ally with the fancy. They reject form and colour. A pencil and dry slate (she used to say) were the proper arena for such combatants.

To those puny objectors against cards, as nurturing the bad passions, she would retort, that man is a gaming animal. He must be always trying to get the better in something or other —that this passion can scarcely be more safely expended than upon a game at cards: that cards are a temporary illusion; in truth, a mere drama; for we do but *play* at being mightily concerned, where a few idle shillings are at stake, yet, during the illusion, we are as mightily concerned as those whose stake is crowns and kingdoms. They are a sort of dream-fighting; much ado; great battling, and little bloodshed; mighty means for disproportioned ends: quite as diverting, and a great deal

more innoxious, than many of those more serious *games* of life, which men play without esteeming them to be such.

With great deference to the old lady's judgment in these matters, I think I have experienced some moments in my life, when playing at cards *for nothing* has even been agreeable. When I am in sickness, or not in the best spirits, I sometimes call for the cards, and play a game at piquet *for love* with my cousin Bridget—Bridget Elia.[39]

I grant there is something sneaking in it; but with a toothache, or a sprained ankle—when you are subdued and humble,—you are glad to put up with an inferior spring of action.

There is such a thing in nature, I am convinced, as *sick whist*.

I grant it is not the highest style of man—I deprecate the manes[40] of Sarah Battle—she lives not, alas! to whom I should apologize.

At such times, those terms which my old friend objected to, come in as something admissible. I love to get a tierce or a quatorze, though they mean nothing. I am subdued to an inferior interest. Those shadows of winning amuse me.

That last game I had with my sweet cousin (I capotted[41] her)—(dare I tell thee how foolish I am?)—I wished it might have lasted for ever, though we gained nothing, and lost nothing, though it was a mere shade of play: I would be content to go on in that idle folly for ever. The pipkin[42] should be ever boiling, that was to prepare the gentle lenitive to my foot, which Bridget was doomed to apply after the game was over; and, as I do not much relish appliances, there it should ever bubble. Bridget and I should be ever playing.

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[39] his sister, Mary Lamb.
[40] shade, spirit.
[41] won all the tricks.
[42] earthen pot.

A Chapter on Ears

I HAVE no ear.—

Mistake me not, reader,—nor imagine that I am by nature destitute of those exterior twin appendages, hanging ornaments and (architecturally speaking) handsome volutes [43] to the human capital. Better my mother had never borne me.—I am, I think, rather delicately than copiously provided with those conduits; and I feel no disposition to envy the mule for his plenty, or the mole for her exactness, in those ingenious labyrinthine inlets—those indispensable side-intelligencers.

Neither have I incurred or done anything to incur, with Defoe, that hideous disfigurement, which constrained him to draw upon assurance—to feel "quite unabashed," [44] and at ease upon that article. I was never, I thank my stars, in the pillory; nor, if I read them aright, is it within the compass of my destiny that I ever should be.

When therefore I say that I have no ear, you will understand me to mean—*for music.*—To say that this heart never melted at the concourse of sweet sounds, would be a foul self-libel.—*"Water parted from the sea"* never fails to move it strangely. So does *"In infancy."* [45] But they were used to be sung at her harpsichord (the old-fashioned instrument in vogue in those days) by a gentlewoman—the gentlest, sure that ever merited the appellation—the sweetest—why should I hesitate to name Mrs. S——, once the blooming Fanny Weatherall of the Temple—who had power to thrill the soul of Elia, small imp as he was, even in his long coats; and to make him glow, tremble, and blush with a passion that not faintly indicated the day-spring of that absorbing sentiment, which was after-

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[43] spiral scrolls, especially on the top of Ionic columns.
[44] an echo of the allusion to Defoe in Pope's *Dunciad.*
[45] Both are from Arne's opera *Artaxerxes,* which was Lamb's "First Play." (See his essay of that title.)

wards destined to overwhelm and subdue his nature quite, for Alice W—n.[46]

I even think that *sentimentally* I am disposed to harmony. But *organically* I am incapable of a tune. I have been practising *"God save the King"* all my life; whistling and humming it over to myself in solitary corners; and am not yet arrived, they tell me, within many quavers of it. Yet hath the loyalty of Elia never been impeached.

I am not without suspicion that I have an undeveloped faculty of music within me. For thrumming, in my wild way, on my friend A.'s[47] piano, the other morning, while he was engaged in an adjoining parlor,—on his return he was pleased to say *he thought it could not be the maid!* On his first surprise at hearing the keys touched in somewhat an airy and masterful way, not dreaming of me, his suspicions had lighted on Jenny. But a grace, snatched from a superior refinement, soon convinced him that some being—technically perhaps deficient, but higher informed from a principle common to all the fine arts—had swayed the keys to a mood which Jenny, with all her (less cultivated) enthusiasm, could never have elicited from them. I mention this as a proof of my friend's penetration, and not with any view of disparaging Jenny.

Scientifically I could never be made to understand (yet I have taken some pains) what a note in music is; or how one note should differ from another. Much less in voices can I distinguish a soprano from a tenor. Only sometimes the thorough-bass I contrive to guess at, from its being supereminently harsh and disagreeable. I tremble, however, for my misapplication of the simplest terms of that which I disclaim. While I profess my ignorance, I scarce know what to say I am ignorant of. I hate, perhaps, by misnomers. *Sostenuto* and

[46] apparently to be identified with Ann Simmons, a Hertfordshire girl whom Lamb knew in his youth, and who married a pawnbroker named Bartrum.
[47] thought to be William Ayrton.

adagio stand in the like relation of obscurity to me; and *Sol, Fa, Mi, Re,* is as conjuring [48] as *Baralipton.*[49]

It is hard to stand alone in an age like this (constituted to the quick and critical perception of all harmonious combinations, I verily believe, beyond all preceding ages, since Jubal stumbled upon the gamut), to remain as it were singly unimpressible to the magic influences of an art which is said to have such an especial stroke at soothing, elevating, and refining the passions.—Yet rather than break the candid current of my confessions, I must avow to you that I have received a great deal more pain than pleasure from this so cried-up faculty.

I am constitutionally susceptible of noises. A carpenter's hammer, in a warm summer noon, will fret me into more than midsummer madness. But those unconnected, unset sounds are nothing to the measured malice of music. The ear is passive to those single strokes; willingly enduring stripes, while it hath no task to con. To music it cannot be passive. It will strive—mine at least will—spite of its inaptitude, to thrid [50] the maze; like an unskilled eye painfully poring upon hieroglyphics. I have sat through an Italian Opera, till, for sheer pain, and inexplicable anguish, I have rushed out into the noisiest places of the crowded streets, to solace myself with sounds which I was not obliged to follow, and get rid of the distracting torment of endless, fruitless, barren attention! I take refuge in the unpretending assemblage of honest common-life sounds;—and the purgatory of the Enraged Musician becomes my paradise.

I have sat at an Oratorio (that profanation of the purposes of the cheerful playhouse) watching the faces of the auditory in the pit (what a contrast to Hogarth's Laughing Audience!) immovable, or affecting some faint emotion,—till (as some have said that our occupations in the next world will be but a shadow

[48] mysterious.
[49] a term in logic, for one of the figures of the syllogism.
[50] thread.

of what delighted us in this) I have imagined myself in some cold theatre in Hades, where some of the *forms* of the earthly one should be kept up, with none of the *enjoyment;* or like that

——Party in a parlor,
All silent, and all DAMNED! [51]

Above all, those insufferable concertos, and pieces of music, as they are called, do plague and embitter my apprehension.—Words are something; but to be exposed to an endless battery of mere sounds; to be long a-dying, to lie stretched upon a rack of roses; to keep up languor by unintermitted effort; to pile honey upon sugar, and sugar upon honey, to an interminable tedious sweetness; to fill up sound with feeling, and strain ideas to keep pace with it; to gaze on empty frames, and be forced to make the pictures for yourself; to read a book *all stops,* and be obliged to supply the verbal matter; to invent extempore tragedies to answer to the vague gestures of an inexplicable rambling mime—these are faint shadows of what I have undergone from a series of the ablest-executed pieces of this empty *instrumental music.*

I deny not that in the opening of a concert I have experienced something vastly lulling and agreeable:—afterwards followeth the languor, and the oppression. Like that disappointing book in Patmos,[52] or like the comings on of melancholy, described by Burton, doth music make her first insinuating approaches:—"Most pleasant it is to such as are melancholy given, to walk alone in some solitary grove, betwixt wood and water, by some brook side, and to meditate upon some delightsome and pleasant subject, which shall affect him most, *amabilis insania,*[53] and *mentis gratissimus error.*[54] A most incomparable delight to build

[51] from a stanza (later omitted) in the first edition of Wordsworth's *Peter Bell.*
[52] described in *Revelation,* X.
[53] charming madness.
[54] most pleasing hallucinations.

castles in the air, to go smiling to themselves, acting an infinite variety of parts, which they suppose, and strongly imagine, they act, or that they see done.—So delightsome these toys at first, they could spend whole days and nights without sleep, even whole years in such contemplations, and fantastical meditations, which are like so many dreams, and will hardly be drawn from them—winding and unwinding themselves as so many clocks, and still pleasing their humours, until at last the SCENE TURNS UPON A SUDDEN, and they being now habitated to such meditations and solitary places, can endure no company, can think of nothing but harsh and distasteful subjects. Fear, sorrow, suspicion, *subrusticus pudor*,[55] discontent, cares, and weariness of life, surprise them on a sudden, and they can think of nothing else: continually suspecting, no sooner are their eyes open, but this infernal plague of melancholy seizeth upon them, and terrifies their souls, representing some dismal object to their minds; which now, by no means, no labour, no persuasions, they can avoid, they cannot be rid of, they cannot resist."

Something like this "SCENE-TURNING" I have experienced at the evening parties, at the house of my good Catholic friend *Nov*——;[56] who, by the aid of a capital organ, himself the most finished of players, converts his drawing-room into a chapel, his week-days into Sundays, and these latter into minor heavens.

When my friend commences upon one of those solemn anthems, which peradventure struck upon my heedless ear, rambling in the side aisles of the dim Abbey, some five-and-thirty years since, waking a new sense, and putting a soul of old religion into my young apprehension—(whether it be that in which the psalmist, weary of the persecutions of bad men, wisheth to himself dove's wings, or that other, which with a like measure of sobriety and pathos, inquireth by what means the young man

[55] awkward shyness.
[56] Vincent Novello, composer and organist.

shall best cleanse his mind)—a holy calm pervadeth me.—I am for the time

> rapt above earth,
> And possess joys not promised at my birth.[57]

But when this master of the spell, not content to have laid a soul prostrate, goes on, in his power, to inflict more bliss than lies in her capacity to receive,—impatient to overcome her "earthly" with his "heavenly,"—still pouring in, for protracted hours, fresh waves and fresh from the sea of sound, or from that inexhausted German ocean, above which, in triumphant progress, dolphin-seated, ride those Arions [58] Haydn and Mozart, with their attendant Tritons [59] Bach, Beethoven, and a countless tribe, whom to attempt to reckon up would but plunge me again in the deeps,—I stagger under the weight of harmony, reeling to and fro at my wit's end;—clouds, as of frankincense, oppress me—priests, altars, censers, dazzle before me—the genius of *his* religion hath me in her toils—a shadowy triple tiara invests the brow of my friend, late so naked, so ingenuous—he is Pope,—and by him sits, like as in the anomaly of dreams, a she-Pope too,—tri-coroneted like himself!—I am converted, and yet a Protestant;—at once *malleus hereticorum*,[60] and myself grand heresiarch:[61] or three heresies center in my person: I am Marcion, Ebion, and Cerinthus [62]—Gog and Magog—what not?—till the coming in of the friendly supper-tray dissipates the figment, and a draught of true Lutheran beer (in which chiefly my friend shows himself no bigot) at once reconciles me to the rationalities of a purer faith, and restores to me the

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[57] taken, inaccurately, from a quotation in Walton's *Compleat Angler*.
[58] In the ancient story, Arion so enchanted a dolphin with his playing that he escaped a threatened death at the hands of sailors and was borne safely to land on the dolphin's back.
[59] deities of the sea.
[60] scourge (literally, "hammer") of heretics.
[61] leader in heresy, chief of heretics.
[62] heretics and unbelievers.

genuine unterrifying aspects of my pleasant-countenanced host and hostess.

The Old and the New Schoolmaster

MY READING has been lamentably desultory and immethodical. Odd, out of the way, old English plays, and treatises, have supplied me with most of my notions, and ways of feeling. In everything that relates to *science,* I am a whole Encyclopædia behind the rest of the world. I should have scarcely cut a figure among the franklins, or country gentlemen, in King John's days. I know less geography than a schoolboy of six weeks' standing. To me a map of old Ortelius is as authentic as Arrowsmith.[1] I do not know whereabout Africa merges into Asia; whether Ethiopia lie in one or other of those great divisions; nor can form the remotest conjecture of the position of New South Wales, or Van Diemen's Land. Yet do I hold a correspondence with a very dear friend in the first-named of these two Terræ Incognitæ.[2] I have no astronomy. I do not know where to look for the Bear, or Charles's Wain; the place of any star; or the name of any of them at sight. I guess at Venus only by her brightness—and if the sun on some portentous morn were to make his first appearance in the West, I verily believe, that, while all the world were gasping in apprehension about me, I alone should stand unterrified, from sheer incuriosity and want of observation. Of history and chronology I possess some vague points, such as one cannot help picking up in the course of miscellaneous study; but I never deliberately sat down to a chronicle, even of my own country. I have most dim apprehensions of the four great

[1] Aaron Arrowsmith was an eminent cartographer of Lamb's own time, Abraham Ortelius a geographer of the sixteenth century.
[2] unknown lands.

monarchies; and sometimes the Assyrian, sometimes the Persian, floats as *first* in my fancy. I make the widest conjectures concerning Egypt, and her shepherd kings. My friend *M.*,[3] with great painstaking, got me to think I understood the first proposition in Euclid, but gave me over in despair at the second. I am entirely unacquainted with the modern languages; and, like a better man[4] than myself, have "small Latin and less Greek." I am a stranger to the shapes and texture of the commonest trees, herbs, flowers—not from the circumstance of my being town-born—for I should have brought the same inobservant spirit into the world with me, had I first seen it "on Devon's leafy shores,"—and am no less at a loss among purely town-objects, tools, engines, mechanic processes.—Not that I affect ignorance—but my head has not many mansions, nor spacious; and I have been obliged to fill it with such cabinet curiosities as it can hold without aching. I sometimes wonder how I have passed my probation with so little discredit in the world, as I have done, upon so meagre a stock. But the fact is, a man may do very well with a very little knowledge, and scarce be found out, in mixed company; everybody is so much more ready to produce his own, than to call for a display of your acquisitions. But in a *tête-à-tête* there is no shuffling. Truth will out. There is nothing which I dread so much, as the being left alone for a quarter of an hour with a sensible, well-informed man, that does not know me. I lately got into a dilemma of this sort.—

In one of my daily jaunts between Bishopsgate and Shacklewell, the coach stopped to take up a staid-looking gentleman, about the wrong side of thirty, who was giving his parting directions (while the steps were adjusting), in a tone of mild authority, to a tall youth, who seemed to be neither his clerk,

[3] Thomas Manning, mathematician and explorer.
[4] Shakespeare (as described by Ben Jonson).

his son, nor his servant, but something partaking of all three. The youth was dismissed, and we drove on. As we were the sole passengers, he naturally enough addressed his conversation to me; and we discussed the merits of the fare, the civility and punctuality of the driver; the circumstance of an opposition coach having been lately set up, with the probabilities of its success—to all which I was enabled to return pretty satisfactory answers, having been drilled into this kind of etiquette by some years' daily practice of riding to and fro in the stage aforesaid—when he suddenly alarmed me by a startling question whether I had seen the show of prize cattle that morning in Smithfield? Now as I had not seen it, and do not greatly care for such sort of exhibitions, I was obliged to return a cold negative. He seemed a little mortified, as well as astonished, at my declaration, as (it appeared) he was just come fresh from the sight, and doubtless had hoped to compare notes on the subject. However he assured me that I had lost a fine treat, as it far exceeded the show of last year. We were now approaching Norton Falgate, when the sight of some shop-goods *ticketed* freshened him up into a dissertation upon the cheapness of cottons this spring. I was now a little in heart, as the nature of my morning avocations had brought me into some sort of familiarity with the raw material; and I was surprised to find how eloquent I was becoming on the state of the India market—when, presently, he dashed my incipient vanity to the earth at once, by inquiring whether I had ever made any calculation as to the value of the rental of all the retail shops in London. Had he asked of me, what song the Sirens sang, or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women,[5] I might, with Sir Thomas Browne, have hazarded a "wide solution." My companion saw my embarrassment, and, the almshouses

[5] These two queries, says Browne, "though puzzling questions, are not beyond all conjecture." (*Urn-Burial.*)

beyond Shoreditch just coming in view, with great good-nature and dexterity shifted his conversation to the subject of public charities; which led to the comparative merits of provision for the poor in past and present times, with observations on the old monastic institutions, and charitable orders;—but, finding me rather dimly impressed with some glimmering notions from old poetic associations, than strongly fortified with any speculations reducible to calculation on the subject, he gave the matter up; and, the country beginning to open more and more upon us, as we approached the turnpike at Kingsland (the destined termination of his journey), he put a home thrust upon me, in the most unfortunate position he could have chosen, by advancing some queries relative to the North Pole Expedition.[6] While I was muttering out something about the Panorama of those strange regions (which I had actually seen), by way of parrying the question, the coach stopping relieved me from any further apprehensions. My companion getting out, left me in the comfortable possession of my ignorance; and I heard him, as he went off, putting questions to an outside passenger, who had alighted with him, regarding an epidemic disorder, that had been rife about Dalston; and which, my friend assured him, had gone through five or six schools in that neighbourhood. The truth now flashed upon me, that my companion was a schoolmaster; and that the youth, whom he had parted from at our first acquaintance, must have been one of the bigger boys, or the usher.—He was evidently a kind-hearted man, who did not seem so much desirous of provoking discussion by the questions which he put, as of obtaining information at any rate. It did not appear that he took any interest, either, in such kind of inquiries, for their own sake; but that he was in some way bound to seek for knowledge. A greenish-coloured coat, which he had

[6] Probably the famous and ill-fated expedition of Sir John Franklin, in 1819-1822, is meant.

on, forbade me to surmise that he was a clergyman. The adventure gave birth to some reflections on the difference between persons of his profession in past and present times.

Rest to the souls of those fine old Pedagogues; the breed, long since extinct, of the Lilys, and the Linacres[7]: who, believing that all learning was contained in the languages which they taught, and despising every other acquirement as superficial and useless, came to their task as to a sport! Passing from infancy to age, they dreamed away all their days as in a grammar-school. Revolving in a perpetual cycle of declensions, conjugations, syntaxes, and prosodies; renewing constantly the occupations which had charmed their studious childhood; rehearsing continually the part of the past; life must have slipped from them at last like one day. They were always in their first garden, reaping harvests of their golden time, among their *Flori* and their *Spici-legia*[8]; in Arcadia still, but kings; the ferule of their sway not much harsher, but of like dignity with that mild sceptre attributed to king Basileus; the Greek and Latin, their stately Pamela and their Philoclea; with the occasional duncery of some untoward Tyro, serving for a refreshing interlude of a Mopsa, or a clown Damætas![9]

With what a savour doth the Preface to Colet's,[10] or (as it is sometimes called) Paul's Accidence, set forth! "To exhort every man to the learning of grammar, that intendeth to attain the understanding of the tongues, wherein is contained a great treasury of wisdom and knowledge, it would seem but vain and lost labour; for so much as it is known, that nothing can surely be ended, whose beginning is either feeble or faulty; and no building be perfect, whereas the foundation and ground-work

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[7] William Lily and Thomas Linacre were two of the pioneers of classical scholarship in England. Both lived in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

[8] gleanings and selections; that is, anthologies from the Latin authors for translation into English.

[9] characters in Sidney's *Arcadia*.

[10] John Colet, a contemporary of Lily and Linacre, was the founder of St. Paul's School.

is ready to fall, and unable to uphold the burden of the frame." How well doth this stately preamble (comparable to those which Milton commendeth as "having been the usage to prefix to some solemn law, then first promulgated by Solon, or Lycurgus") correspond with and illustrate that pious zeal for conformity, expressed in a succeeding clause, which would fence about grammar-rules with the severity of faith-articles!—"as for the diversity of grammars, it is well profitably taken away by the Kings Majesties wisdom, who foreseeing the inconvenience, and favourably providing the remedie, caused one kind of grammar by sundry learned men to be diligently drawn, and so to be set out, only everywhere to be taught for the use of learners, and for the hurt in changing of schoolmaisters." What a *gusto* in that which follows: "wherein it is profitable that he [the pupil] can orderly decline his noun, and his verb." *His* noun!

The fine dream is fading away fast; and the least concern of a teacher in the present day is to inculcate grammar-rules.

The modern schoolmaster is expected to know a little of everything, because his pupil is required not to be entirely ignorant of anything. He must be superficially, if I may so say, omniscient. He is to know something of pneumatics; of chemistry; of whatever is curious, or proper to excite the attention of the youthful mind; an insight into mechanics is desirable, with a touch of statistics; the quality of soils, &c. botany, the constitution of his country, *cum multis aliis*.[11] You may get a notion of some part of his expected duties by consulting the famous Tractate on Education[12] addressed to Mr. Hartlib.

All these things—these, or the desire of them—he is expected to instil, not by set lessons from professors, which he may charge in the bill, but at school-intervals, as he walks the streets, or saunters through green fields (those natural instructors), with

[11] with many other things.
[12] Milton's *Tractate* proposes a tremendously extensive and varied program of studies.

his pupils. The least part of what is expected from him is to be done in school-hours. He must insinuate knowledge at the *mollia tempora fandi*.[13] He must seize every occasion—the season of the year—the time of the day—a passing cloud—a rainbow—a waggon of hay—a regiment of soldiers going by—to inculcate something useful. He can receive no pleasure from a casual glimpse of Nature, but must catch at it as an object of instruction. He must interpret beauty into the picturesque. He cannot relish a beggar-man, or a gipsy, for thinking of the suitable improvement. Nothing comes to him, not spoiled by the sophisticating medium of moral uses. The Universe—that Great Book, as it has been called—is to him indeed, to all intents and purposes, a book, out of which he is doomed to read tedious homilies to distasting school-boys.—Vacations themselves are none to him, he is only rather worse off than before; for commonly he has some intrusive upper-boy fastened upon him at such times; some cadet of a great family; some neglected lump of nobility, or gentry; that he must drag after him to the play, to the Panorama, to Mr. Bartley's Orrery,[14] to the Panopticon, or into the country, to a friend's house, or his favourite watering-place. Wherever he goes, this uneasy shadow attends him. A boy is at his board, and in his path, and in all his movements. He is boy-rid, sick of perpetual boy.

Boys are capital fellows in their own way, among their mates; but they are unwholesome companions for grown people. The restraint is felt no less on the one side, than on the other.—Even a child, that "plaything for an hour," tires *always*. The noises of children, playing their own fancies—as I now hearken to them by fits, sporting on the green before my window, while I am engaged in these grave speculations at my neat suburban retreat at Shacklewell—by distance made more sweet—inex-

[13] most favorable times (adapted from Vergil).
[14] George Bartley, the comedian, who also lectured on astronomy, and illustrated his lectures with an orrery, a model of the solar system.

pressibly take from the labour of my task. It is like writing to music. They seem to modulate my periods. They ought at least to do so—for in the voice of that tender age there is a kind of poetry, far unlike the harsh prose-accents of man's conversation.—I should but spoil their sport, and diminish my own sympathy for them, by mingling in their pastime.

I would not be domesticated all my days with a person of very superior capacity to my own—not, if I know myself at all, from any considerations of jealousy or self-comparison, for the occasional communion with such minds has constituted the fortune and felicity of my life—but the habit of too constant intercourse with spirits above you, instead of raising you, keeps you down. Too frequent doses of original thinking from others, restrain what lesser portion of that faculty you may possess of your own. You get entangled in another man's mind, even as you lose yourself in another man's grounds. You are walking with a tall varlet, whose strides out-pace yours to lassitude. The constant operation of such potent agency would reduce me, I am convinced, to imbecility. You may derive thoughts from others; your way of thinking, the mould in which your thoughts are cast, must be your own. Intellect may be imparted, but not each man's intellectual frame.—

As little as I should wish to be always thus dragged upwards, as little (or rather still less) is it desirable to be stunted downwards by your associates. The trumpet does not more stun you by its loudness, than a whisper teases you by its provoking inaudibility.

Why are we never quite at our ease in the presence of a schoolmaster?—because we are conscious that he is not quite at his ease in ours. He is awkward, and out of place, in the society of his equals. He comes like Gulliver from among his little people, and he cannot fit the stature of his understanding to yours. He cannot meet you on the square. He wants a point given him, like an indifferent whist-player. He is so used to

teaching, that he wants to be teaching *you*. One of these professors, upon my complaining that these little sketches of mine were anything but methodical, and that I was unable to make them otherwise, kindly offered to instruct me in the method by which young gentlemen in *his* seminary were taught to compose English themes.—The jests of a schoolmaster are coarse, or thin. They do not *tell* out of school. He is under the restraint of a formal and didactive hypocrisy in company, as a clergyman is under a moral one. He can no more let his intellect loose in society, than the other can his inclinations.—He is forlorn among his co-evals; his juniors cannot be his friends.

"I take blame to myself," said a sensible man of this profession, writing to a friend respecting a youth who had quitted his school abruptly, "that your nephew was not more attached to me. But persons in my situation are more to be pitied, than can well be imagined. We are surrounded by young, and, consequently, ardently affectionate hearts, but *we* can never hope to share an atom of their affections. The relation of master and scholar forbids this. *How pleasing this must be to you, how I envy your feelings,* my friends will sometimes say to me, when they see young men, whom I have educated, return after some years' absence from school, their eyes shining with pleasure, while they shake hands with their old master, bringing a present of game to me, or a toy to my wife, and thanking me in the warmest terms for my care of their education. A holiday is begged for the boys; the house is a scene of happiness; I, only, am sad at heart.—This fine-spirited and warm-hearted youth, who fancies he repays his master with gratitude for the care of his boyish years—this young man—in the eight long years I watched over him with a parent's anxiety, never could repay me with one look of genuine feeling. He was proud, when I praised; he was submissive, when I reproved him; but he did never *love* me—and what he now mistakes for gratitude and

kindness for me, is but the pleasant sensation, which all persons feel at revisiting the scenes of their boyish hopes and fears; and the seeing on equal terms the man they were accustomed to look up to with reverence. My wife too," this interesting correspondent goes on to say, "my once darling Anna, is the wife of a schoolmaster.—When I married her—knowing that the wife of a schoolmaster ought to be a busy notable creature, and fearing that my gentle Anna would ill supply the loss of my dear bustling mother, just then dead, who never sat still, was in every part of the house in a moment, and whom I was obliged sometimes to threaten to fasten down in a chair, to save her from fatiguing herself to death—I expressed my fears, that I was bringing her into a way of life unsuitable to her; and she, who loved me tenderly, promised for my sake to exert herself to perform the duties of her new situation. She promised, and she has kept her word. What wonders will not woman's love perform?—My house is managed with a propriety and decorum, unknown in other schools; my boys are well fed, look healthy, and have every proper accommodation; and all this performed with a careful economy, that never descends to meanness. But I have lost my gentle, *helpless* Anna!——When we sit down to enjoy an hour of repose after the fatigue of the day, I am compelled to listen to what have been her useful (and they are really useful) employments through the day, and what she proposes for her to-morrow's task. Her heart and her features are changed by the duties of her situation. To the boys, she never appears other than the *master's wife,* and she looks up to me as the *boys' master;* to whom all show of love and affection would be highly improper, and unbecoming the dignity of her situation and mine. Yet *this* my gratitude forbids me to hint to her. For my sake she submitted to be this altered creature, and can I reproach her for it?"—For the communication of this letter, I am indebted to my cousin Bridget.

Imperfect Sympathies

I am of a constitution so general, that it consorts and sympathiseth with all things; I have no antipathy, or rather idiosyncrasy in anything. Those national repugnances do not touch me, nor do I behold with prejudice the French, Italian, Spaniard, or Dutch.—*Religio Medici.*

THAT the author of the *Religio Medici,* mounted upon the airy stilts of abstraction, conversant about notional and conjectural essences; in whose categories of Being the possible took the upper hand of the actual; should have overlooked the impertinent individualities of such poor concretions as mankind, is not much to be admired. It is rather to be wondered at, that in the genus of animals he should have condescended to distinguish that species at all. For myself—earth-bound and fettered to the scene of my activities,—

> Standing on earth, not rapt above the sky,[15]

I confess that I do feel the differences of mankind, national or individual, to an unhealthy excess. I can look with no indifferent eye upon things or persons. Whatever is, is to me a matter of taste or distaste; or when once it becomes indifferent, it begins to be disrelishing. I am, in plainer words, a bundle of prejudices—made up of likings and dislikings—the veriest thrall to sympathies, apathies, antipathies. In a certain sense, I hope it may be said of me that I am a lover of my species. I can feel for all indifferently, but I cannot feel towards all equally. The more purely-English word that expresses sympathy will better explain my meaning. I can be a friend

[15] from *Paradise Lost,* slightly changed.

to a worthy man, who upon another account cannot be my mate or *fellow*. I cannot *like* all people alike.[16]

I have been trying all my life to like Scotchmen, and am obliged to desist from the experiment in despair. They cannot like me—and in truth, I never knew one of that nation who attempted to do it. There is something more plain and ingenuous in their mode of proceeding. We know one another at first sight. There is an order of imperfect intellects (under which mine must be content to rank) which in its constitution is essentially anti-Caledonian. The owners of the sort of faculties I allude to have minds rather suggestive than comprehensive. They have no pretences to much clearness or precision in their ideas, or in their manner of expressing them. Their intellectual wardrobe (to confess fairly) has few whole pieces in it. They are content with fragments and scattered pieces of Truth. She presents no full front to them—a feature or side-face at the most. Hints and glimpses, germs and crude essays at a system, is the utmost they pretend to. They beat up a little game peradventure—and leave it to knottier heads, more robust constitutions, to run it down. The light that lights them

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[16] I would be understood as confining myself to the subject of *imperfect sympathies*. To nations or classes of men there can be no direct *antipathy*. There may be individuals born and constellated so opposite to another individual nature, that the same sphere cannot hold them. I have met with my moral antipodes, and can believe the story of two persons meeting (who never saw one another before in their lives) and instantly fighting.

> ——We by proof find there should be
> 'Twixt man and man such an antipathy,
> That though he can show no just reason why
> For any former wrong or injury,
> Can neither find a blemish in his fame,
> Nor aught in face or feature justly blame,
> Can challenge or accuse him of no evil,
> Yet notwithstanding hates him as a devil.

The lines are from old Heywood's *Hierarchie of Angels*, and he subjoins a curious story in confirmation, of a Spaniard who attempted to assassinate a King Ferdinand of Spain, and being put to the rack could give no other reason for the deed but an inveterate antipathy which he had taken to the first sight of the King.

> ——The cause which to that act compell'd him
> Was, he ne'er loved him since he first beheld him. [Lamb's note].

is not steady and polar, but mutable and shifting: waxing, and again waning. Their conversation is accordingly. They will throw out a random word in or out of season, and be content to let it pass for what it is worth. They cannot speak always as if they were upon their oath—but must be understood, speaking or writing, with some abatement. They seldom wait to mature a proposition, but e'en bring it to market in the green ear. They delight to impart their defective discoveries as they arise, without waiting for their full development. They are no systematisers, and would but err more by attempting it. Their minds, as I said before, are suggestive merely. The brain of a true Caledonian (if I am not mistaken) is constituted upon quite a different plan. His Minerva is born in panoply. You are never admitted to see his ideas in their growth—if, indeed, they do grow, and are not rather put together upon principles of clockwork. You never catch his mind in an undress. He never hints or suggests any thing, but unlades his stock of ideas in perfect order and completeness. He brings his total wealth into company, and gravely unpacks it. His riches are always about him. He never stoops to catch a glittering something in your presence, to share it with you, before he quite knows whether it be true touch or not. You cannot cry *halves* to any thing that he finds. He does not find, but bring. You never witness his first apprehension of a thing. His understanding is always at its meridian—you never see the first dawn, the early streaks. He has no falterings of self-suspicion. Surmises, guesses, misgivings, half-intuitions, semi-consciousnesses, partial illuminations, dim instincts, embryo conceptions, have no place in his brain, or vocabulary. The twilight of dubiety never falls upon him. Is he orthodox —he has no doubts. Is he an infidel—he has none either. Between the affirmative and the negative there is no borderland with him. You cannot hover with him upon the confines of truth, or wander in the maze of a probable argument. He

always keeps the path. You cannot make excursions with him —for he sets you right. His taste never fluctuates. His morality never abates. He cannot compromise, or understand middle actions. There can be but a right and a wrong. His conversation is as a book. His affirmations have the sanctity of an oath. You must speak upon the square with him. He stops a metaphor like a suspected person in an enemy's country. "A healthy book!"—said one of his countrymen to me, who had ventured to give that appellation to *John Buncle*,[17]—"did I catch rightly what you said? I have heard of a man in health, and of a healthy state of body, but I do not see how that epithet can be properly applied to a book." Above all, you must beware of indirect expressions before a Caledonian. Clap an extinguisher upon your irony, if you are unhappily blest with a vein of it. Remember you are upon your oath. I have a print of a graceful female after Leonardo da Vinci, which I was showing off to Mr. ————. After he had examined it minutely, I ventured to ask him how he liked MY BEAUTY (a foolish name it goes by among my friends)—when he very gravely assured me that "he had considerable respect for my character and talents" (so he was pleased to say), "but had not given himself much thought about the degree of my personal pretensions." The misconception staggered me, but did not seem much to disconcert him.—Persons of this nation are particularly fond of affirming a truth—which nobody doubts. They do not so properly affirm, as annunciate it. They do indeed appear to have such a love of truth (as if, like virtue, it were valuable for itself) that all truth becomes equally valuable, whether the proposition that contains it be new or old, disputed, or such as is impossible to become a subject of disputation. I was present not long since at a party of North Britons, where a son of Burns was expected; and happened to drop a silly expression (in my

[17] cf. note 23, p. 340.

South British way), that I wished it were the father instead of the son—when four of them started up at once to inform me that "that was impossible, because he was dead." An impracticable wish, it seems, was more than they could conceive. Swift has hit off this part of their character, namely their love of truth, in his biting way, but with an illiberality that necessarily confines the passages to the margin.[18] The tediousness of these people is certainly provoking. I wonder if they ever tire one another!—In my early life I had a passionate fondness for the poetry of Burns. I have sometimes foolishly hoped to ingratiate myself with his countrymen by expressing it. But I have always found that a true Scot resents your admiration of this compatriot, even more than he would your contempt of him. The latter he imputes to your "imperfect acquaintance with many of the words which he uses"; and the same objection makes it a presumption in you to suppose that you can admire him.—Thomson[19] they seem to have forgotten. Smollett[20] they have neither forgotten nor forgiven for his delineation of Rory and his companion, upon their first introduction to our metropolis.—Speak of Smollett as a great genius, and they will retort upon you Hume's *History*[21] compared with *his* Continuation of it. What if the historian had continued *Humphrey Clinker?*

I have, in the abstract, no disrespect for Jews. They are a piece of stubborn antiquity, compared with which Stonehenge[22] is in its nonage. They date beyond the pyramids. But I

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[18] There are some people who think they sufficiently acquit themselves and entertain their company, with relating facts of no consequence, not at all out of the road of such common incidents as happen every day; and this I have observed more frequently among the Scots than any other nation, who are very careful not to omit the minutest circumstances of time or place; which kind of discourse, if it were not a little relieved by the uncouth terms and phrases, as well as accent and gesture peculiar to that country, would be hardly tolerable.—*Hints towards an Essay on Conversation.* [Lamb's note].

[19] James Thomson, author of *The Seasons.*

[20] Tobias Smollett, whose most famous novel is *Humphrey Clinker.*

[21] The *History of England* by David Hume was continued by Smollett. For Lamb's opinion of Hume see p. 384.

[22] cf. note 18, p. 276.

should not care to be in habits of familiar intercourse with any of that nation. I confess that I have not the nerves to enter their synagogues. Old prejudices cling about me. I cannot shake off the story of Hugh of Lincoln.[23] Centuries of injury, contempt, and hate, on the one side,—of cloaked revenge, dissimulation, and hate, on the other, between our and their fathers, must, and ought to affect the blood of the children. I cannot believe it can run clear and kindly yet; or that a few fine words, such as candour, liberality, the light of a nineteenth century, can close up the breaches of so deadly a disunion. A Hebrew is nowhere congenial to me. He is least distasteful on 'Change—for the mercantile spirit levels all distinctions, as all are beauties in the dark. I boldly confess that I do not relish the approximation of Jew and Christian, which has become so fashionable. The reciprocal endearments have, to me, something hypocritical and unnatural in them. I do not like to see the Church and Synagogue kissing and congeeing[24] in awkward postures of an affected civility. If *they* are converted, why do they not come over to us altogether? Why keep up a form of separation, when the life of it is fled? If they can sit with us at table, why do they keck[25] at our cookery? I do not understand these half convertites. Jews christianising—Christians judaising—puzzle me. I like fish or flesh. A moderate Jew is a more confounding piece of anomaly than a wet Quaker. The spirit of the synagogue is essentially *separative*. B——[26] would have been more in keeping if he had abided by the faith of his forefathers. There is a fine scorn in his face, which nature meant to be of—Christians. The Hebrew spirit is strong in him, in spite of his proselytism. He cannot conquer the Shibboleth. How it breaks out, when he

[23] a Christian lad murdered, according to the legend, by the Jews.
[24] bowing.
[25] retch.
[26] John Braham, a well-known singer.

sings, "The Children of Israel passed through the Red Sea!" The auditors, for the moment, are as Egyptians to him, and he rides over our necks in triumph. There is no mistaking him.—B—— has a strong expression of sense in his countenance, and it is confirmed by his singing. The foundation of his vocal excellence is sense. He sings with understanding, as Kemble [27] delivered dialogue. He would sing the Commandments, and give an appropriate character to each prohibition. His nation, in general, have not over-sensible countenances. How should they?—but you seldom see a silly expression among them. Gain, and the pursuit of gain, sharpen a man's visage. I never heard of an idiot being born among them.—Some admire the Jewish female physiognomy. I admire it—but with trembling. Jael had those full dark inscrutable eyes.

In the Negro countenance you will often meet with strong traits of benignity. I have felt yearnings of tenderness towards some of these faces—or rather masks—that have looked out kindly upon one in casual encounters in the streets and highways. I love what Fuller beautifully calls—these "images of God cut in ebony." But I should not like to associate with them, to share my meals and my good-nights with them—because they are black.

I love Quaker ways, and Quaker worship. I venerate the Quaker principles. It does me good for the rest of the day when I meet any of their people in my path. When I am ruffled or disturbed by any occurrence, the sight, or quiet voice of a Quaker, acts upon me as a ventilator, lightening the air, and taking off a load from the bosom. But I cannot like the Quakers (as Desdemona would say) "to live with them." I am all over sophisticated—with humours, fancies, craving hourly sympathy. I must have books, pictures, theatres, chit-chat, scandal, jokes, ambiguities, and a thousand whim-whams, which

[27] John Philip Kemble, a famous tragedian.

their simpler taste can do without. I should starve at their primitive banquet. My appetites are too high for the salads which (according to Evelyn) Eve dressed for the angel, my gusto too excited

To sit a guest with Daniel at his pulse.[28]

The indirect answers which Quakers are often found to return to a question put to them may be explained, I think, without the vulgar assumption that they are more given to evasion and equivocating than other people. They naturally look to their words more carefully, and are more cautious of committing themselves. They have a peculiar character to keep up on this head. They stand in a manner upon their veracity. A Quaker is by law exempted from taking an oath. The custom of resorting to an oath in extreme cases, sanctified as it is by all religious antiquity, is apt (it must be confessed) to introduce into the laxer sort of minds the notion of two kinds of truth—the one applicable to the solemn affairs of justice, and the other to the common proceedings of daily intercourse. As truth bound upon the conscience by an oath can be but truth, so in the common affirmations of the shop and the market-place a latitude is expected, and conceded upon questions wanting this solemn covenant. Something less than truth satisfies. It is common to hear a person say, "You do not expect me to speak as if I were upon my oath." Hence a great deal of incorrectness and inadvertency, short of falsehood, creeps into ordinary conversation; and a kind of secondary or laic-truth is tolerated, where clergy-truth—oath-truth, by the nature of the circumstances, is not required. A Quaker knows none of this distinction. His simple affirmation being received, upon the most sacred occasions, without any further test, stamps a value upon the words which he is to use upon the most indifferent topics

[28] from *Paradise Regained*.

of life. He looks to them, naturally, with more severity. You can have of him no more than his word. He knows, if he is caught tripping in a casual expression, he forfeits, for himself, at least, his claim to the invidious exemption. He knows that his syllables are weighed—and how far a consciousness of this particular watchfulness, exerted against a person, has a tendency to produce indirect answers, and a diverting of the question by honest means might be illustrated, and the practice justified, by a more sacred example than is proper to be adduced upon this occasion. The admirable presence of mind, which is notorious in Quakers upon all contingencies, might be traced to this imposed self-watchfulness—if it did not seem rather an humble and secular scion of that old stock of religious constancy, which never bent or faltered in the Primitive Friends, or gave way to the winds of persecution, to the violence of judge or accuser, under trials and racking examinations. "You will never be the wiser, if I sit here answering your questions till midnight," said one of those upright Justices to Penn, who had been putting law-cases with a puzzling subtlety. "Thereafter as the answers may be," retorted the Quaker. The astonishing composure of this people is sometimes ludicrously displayed in lighter instances.—I was travelling in a stage coach with three male Quakers, buttoned up in the straitest nonconformity of their sect. We stopped to bait at Andover, where a meal, partly tea apparatus, partly supper, was set before us. My friends confined themselves to the tea-table. I in my way took supper. When the landlady brought in the bill, the eldest of my companions discovered that she had charged for both meals. This was resisted. Mine hostess was very clamorous and positive. Some mild arguments were used on the part of the Quakers, for which the heated mind of the good lady seemed by no means a fit recipient. The guard came in with his usual peremptory notice. The Quakers pulled out their money, and formally tendered it—so much for tea

—I, in humble imitation, tendering mine—for the supper which I had taken. She would not relax in her demand. So they all three quietly put up their silver, as did myself, and marched out of the room, the eldest and gravest going first, with myself closing up the rear, who thought I could not do better than follow the example of such grave and warrantable personages. We got in. The steps went up. The coach drove off. The murmurs of mine hostess, not very indistinctly or ambiguously pronounced, became after a time inaudible—and now my conscience, which the whimsical scene had for a while suspended, beginning to give some twitches, I waited, in the hope that some justification would be offered by these serious persons for the seeming injustice of their conduct. To my great surprise, not a syllable was dropped on the subject. They sat as mute as at a meeting. At length the eldest of them broke silence, by inquiring of his next neighbour, "Hast thee heard how indigos go at the India House?" and the question operated as a soporific on my moral feeling as far as Exeter.

Dream Children: A Reverie

CHILDREN love to listen to stories about their elders, when *they* were children; to stretch their imagination to the conception of a traditionary great-uncle, or grandame, whom they never saw. It was in this spirit that my little ones crept about me the other evening to hear about their great-grandmother Field,[29] who lived in a great house in Norfolk (a hundred times bigger than that in which they and papa lived), which had been the scene—so at least it was generally believed in that part of the country—of the tragic incidents which they

[29] The essayist's grandmother, Mary Field, had been housekeeper at a country seat—not, however, in Norfolk, but in Hertfordshire.

had lately become familiar with from the ballad of the Children in the Wood. Certain it is that the whole story of the children and their cruel uncle was to be seen fairly carved out in wood upon the chimney-piece of the great hall, the whole story down to the Robin Redbreasts; till a foolish rich person pulled it down to set up a marble one of modern invention in its stead, with no story upon it. Here Alice put out one of her dear mother's looks, too tender to be called upbraiding. Then I went on to say how religious and how good their great-grandmother Field was, how beloved and respected by everybody, though she was not indeed the mistress of this great house, but had only the charge of it (and yet in some respects she might be said to be the mistress of it too) committed to her by the owner, who preferred living in a newer and more fashionable mansion which he had purchased somewhere in the adjoining county; but still she lived in it in a manner as if it had been her own, and kept up the dignity of the great house in a sort while she lived, which afterwards came to decay, and was nearly pulled down, and all its old ornaments stripped and carried away to the owner's other house, where they were set up, and looked as awkward as if someone were to carry away the old tombs they had seen lately at the Abbey, and stick them up in Lady C.'s tawdry gilt drawing-room. Here John smiled, as much as to say, "that would be foolish indeed." And then I told how, when she came to die, her funeral was attended by a concourse of all the poor, and some of the gentry too, of the neighbourhood for many miles round, to show their respect for her memory, because she had been such a good and religious woman; so good, indeed, that she knew all the Psaltery by heart, ay, and a great part of the Testament besides. Here little Alice spread her hands. Then I told what a tall, upright, graceful person their great-grandmother Field once was; and how in her youth she was esteemed the best dancer—here Alice's little right foot played an involuntary

movement, till, upon my looking grave, it desisted—the best dancer, I was saying, in the county, till a cruel disease, called a cancer, came, and bowed her down with pain; but it could never bend her good spirits, or make them stoop, but they were still upright, because she was so good and religious. Then I told how she was used to sleep by herself in a lone chamber of the great lone house; and how she believed that an apparition of two infants was to be seen at midnight gliding up and down the great staircase near where she slept, but she said, "those innocents would do her no harm"; and how frightened I used to be, though in those days I had my maid to sleep with me, because I was never half so good or religious as she—and yet I never saw the infants. Here John expanded all his eyebrows and tried to look courageous. Then I told how good she was to all her grandchildren, having us to the great house in the holidays, where I in particular used to spend many hours by myself, in gazing upon the old busts of the twelve Cæsars, that had been Emperors of Rome, till the old marble heads would seem to live again, or I to be turned into marble with them; how I never could be tired with roaming about that huge mansion, with its vast empty rooms, with their worn-out hangings, fluttering tapestry, and carved oaken panels, with the gilding almost rubbed out—sometimes in the spacious old-fashioned gardens, which I had almost to myself, unless when now and then a solitary gardening man would cross me—and how the nectarines and peaches hung upon the walls, without my ever offering to pluck them—and because I had more pleasure in strolling about among the old melancholy-looking yew-trees, or the firs, and picking up the red berries, and the fir-apples, which were good for nothing but to look at—or in lying about on the fresh grass with all the fine garden smells around me—or basking in the orangery, till I could almost fancy myself ripening too along with the oranges and the limes in that grateful warmth—or in watching the

dace that darted to and fro in the fish-pond, at the bottom of the garden, with here and there a great sulky pike hanging midway down the water in silent state, as if it mocked at their impertinent friskings,—I had more pleasure in those busy-idle diversions than in all the sweet flavours of peaches, nectarines, oranges, and such-like common baits of children. Here John slyly deposited back upon the plate a bunch of grapes, which, not unobserved by Alice, he had meditated dividing with her, and both seemed willing to relinquish them for the present as irrelevant. Then, in somewhat a more heightened tone, I told how, though their great-grandmother Field loved all her grandchildren, yet in an especial manner she might be said to love their uncle, John L——,[30] because he was so handsome and spirited a youth, and a king to the rest of us; and instead of moping about in solitary corners, like some of us, he would mount the most mettlesome horse he could get, when but an imp no bigger than themselves, and make him carry him half over the county in a morning, and join the hunters when there were any out—and yet he loved the old great house and gardens too, but had too much spirit to be always pent up within their boundaries—and how their uncle grew up to man's estate as brave as he was handsome, to the admiration of everybody, but of their great-grandmother Field most especially; and how he used to carry me upon his back when I was a lame-footed boy—for he was a good bit older than me—many a mile when I could not walk for pain;—and how in after-life he became lame-footed too, and I did not always (I fear) make allowances enough for him when he was impatient and in pain, nor remember sufficiently how considerate he had been to me when I was lame-footed, and how when he died, though he had not been dead an hour, it seemed as if he had died a great while ago, such a distance there is betwixt life and death; and how

[30] John Lamb, Charles' brother, whose death induced the mood of this essay.

I bore his death as I thought pretty well at first, but afterwards it haunted and haunted me; and though I did not cry or take it to heart as some do, and as I think he would have done if I had died, yet I missed him all day long, and knew not till then how much I had loved him. I missed his kindness, and I missed his crossness, and wished him to be alive again, to be quarrelling with him (for we quarrelled sometimes), rather than not have him again, and was as uneasy without him, as he, their poor uncle, must have been when the doctor took off his limb. Here the children fell a-crying, and asked if their little mourning which they had on was not for uncle John, and they looked up, and prayed me not to go on about their uncle, but to tell them some stories about their pretty dead mother. Then I told how for seven long years, in hope sometimes, sometimes in despair, yet persisting ever, I courted the fair Alice W—n[31]; and as much as children could understand, I explained to them what coyness, and difficulty, and denial, meant in maidens—when suddenly turning to Alice, the soul of the first Alice looked out at her eyes with such a reality of re-presentment, that I became in doubt which of them stood there before me, or whose that bright hair was; and while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding, and still receding, till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the uttermost distance, which, without speech, strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech: "We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice call Bartrum father. We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages before we have existence, and a name"—and immediately awaking, I found myself quietly seated in my bachelor arm-chair, where I had fallen asleep, with the faithful

[31] cf. note 46, p. 351.

Bridget unchanged by my side—but John L—— (or James Elia) was gone for ever.

Preface[32]

By a Friend of the Late Elia

THIS poor gentleman, who for some months past had been in a declining way, hath at length paid his final tribute to nature.

To say truth, it is time he were gone. The humor of the thing, if there ever was much in it, was pretty well exhausted; and a two years' and a half existence has been a tolerable duration for a phantom.

I am now at liberty to confess that much which I have heard objected to my late friend's writings was well-founded. Crude they are, I grant you—a sort of unlicked, incondite[33] things—villainously pranked in an affected array of antique modes and phrases. They had not been *his*, if they had been other than such; and better it is, that a writer should be natural in a self-pleasing quaintness, than to affect a naturalness (so called) that should be strange to him. Egotistical they have been pronounced by some who did not know that what he tells us, as of himself, was often true only (historically) of another; as in a former essay[34] (to save many instances)—where under the *first person* (his favourite figure) he shadows forth the forlorn estate of a country-boy placed at a London school, far from his friends and connections—in direct opposition to his

[32] This essay was first published in the *London Magazine* for January 1823, soon after the first *Elia* series had appeared and at a time when Lamb intended to discontinue it. In its present, slightly abbreviated form, it furnished the preface for the *Last Essays of Elia*, 1833.

[33] unpolished.

[34] "Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago" treats of the essayist's school days, but assumes the point of view of Coleridge rather than his own.

own early history. If it be egotism to imply and twine with his own identity the griefs and affections of another—making himself many, or reducing many unto himself—then is the skilful novelist, who all along brings in his hero or heroine, speaking of themselves, the greatest egotist of all; who yet has never, therefore, been accused of that narrowness. And how shall the intenser dramatist escape being faulty, who, doubtless, under cover of passion uttered by another, oftentimes gives blameless vent to his most inward feelings, and expresses his own story modestly?

My late friend was in many respects a singular character. Those who did not like him, hated him; and some, who once liked him, afterwards became his bitterest haters. The truth is, he gave himself too little concern what he uttered, and in whose presence. He observed neither time nor place, and would e'en out with what came uppermost. With the severe religionist he would pass for a free-thinker; while the other faction set him down for a bigot, or persuaded themselves that he belied his sentiments. Few understood him; and I am not certain that at all times he quite understood himself. He too much affected that dangerous figure—irony. He sowed doubtful speeches, and reaped plain, unequivocal hatred.—He would interrupt the gravest discussion with some light jest; and yet, perhaps, not quite irrelevant, in ears that could understand it. Your long and much talkers hated him. The informal habit of his mind, joined to an inveterate impediment of speech, forbade him to be an orator; and he seemed determined that no one else should play that part when he was present. He was *petit*[35] and ordinary in his person and appearance. I have seen him sometimes in what is called good company, but where he has been a stranger, sit silent, and be suspected for an odd fellow; till, some unlucky occasion provoking it, he would

[35] slight.

stutter out some senseless pun (not altogether senseless perhaps, if rightly taken), which has stamped his character for the evening. It was hit or miss with him; but nine times out of ten, he contrived by this device to send away a whole company his enemies. His conceptions rose kindlier than his utterance, and his happiest *impromptus* had the appearance of effort. He has been accused of trying to be witty, when in truth he was but struggling to give his poor thoughts articulation. He chose his companions for some individuality of character which they manifested.—Hence, not many persons of science, and few professed *literati,* were of his councils. They were, for the most part, persons of an uncertain fortune; and, as to such people commonly nothing is more obnoxious than a gentleman of settled (though moderate) income, he passed with most of them for a great miser. To my knowledge this was a mistake. His *intimados,*[36] to confess a truth, were in the world's eye a ragged regiment. He found them floating on the surface of society; and the colour, or something else, in the weed pleased him. The burrs stuck to him—but they were good and loving burrs for all that. He never greatly cared for the society of what are called good people. If any of these were scandalized (and offences were sure to arise), he could not help it. When he has been remonstrated with for not making more concessions to the feelings of good people, he would retort by asking, what one point did these good people ever concede to him? He was temperate in his meals and diversions, but always kept a little on this side of abstemiousness. Only in the use of the Indian weed he might be thought a little excessive. He took it, he would say, as a solvent of speech. Marry—as the friendly vapour ascended, how his prattle would curl up sometimes with it! the ligaments which tongue-tied him were loosened, and the stammerer proceeded a statist![37]

[36] intimates.
[37] statesman.

I do not know whether I ought to bemoan or rejoice that my old friend is departed. His jests were beginning to grow obsolete, and his stories to be found out. He felt the approaches of age; and while he pretended to cling to life, you saw how slender were the ties left to bind him. Discoursing with him latterly on this subject, he expressed himself with a pettishness which I thought unworthy of him. In our walks about his suburban retreat (as he called it) at Shacklewell, some children belonging to a school of industry had met us, and bowed and curtseyed, as he thought, in an especial manner to *him*. "They take me for a visiting governor," he muttered earnestly. He had a horror, which he carried to a foible, of looking like anything important and parochial. He thought that he approached nearer to that stamp daily. He had a general aversion from being treated like a grave or respectable character, and kept a wary eye upon the advances of age that should so entitle him. He herded always, while it was possible, with people younger than himself. He did not conform to the march of time, but was dragged along in the procession. His manners lagged behind his years. He was too much of the boy-man. The *toga virilis* [38] never sate gracefully upon his shoulders. The impressions of infancy had burnt into him, and he resented the impertinence of manhood. These were weaknesses; but such as they were, they are a key to explicate some of his writings.

Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading

To mind the inside of a book is to entertain one's self with the forced product of another man's brain. Now, I think a man of quality and breeding may be much amused with the natural sprouts of his own.—Lord Foppington, in *The Relapse*.

AN INGENIOUS acquaintance of my own was so much struck with this bright sally of his Lordship, that he

[38] the Roman garment of manhood.

has left off reading altogether, to the great improvement of his originality. At the hazard of losing some credit on this head, I must confess that I dedicate no inconsiderable portion of my time to other people's thoughts. I dream away my life in others' speculations. I love to lose myself in other men's minds. When I am not walking, I am reading; I cannot sit and think. Books think for me.

I have no repugnances. Shaftesbury is not too genteel for me, nor *Jonathan Wild* too low. I can read anything which I call *a book*. There are things in that shape which I cannot allow for such.

In this catalogue of *books which are no books—biblia a-biblia* [39]—I reckon Court Calendars, Directories, Pocket Books, Draught Boards, bound and lettered on the back, Scientific Treatises, Almanacs, Statutes at Large: the works of Hume, Gibbon, Robertson, Beattie, Soame Jenyns, and generally, all those volumes which "no gentleman's library should be without": the Histories of Flavius Josephus (that learned Jew), and Paley's *Moral Philosophy*. With these exceptions, I can read almost anything. I bless my stars for a taste so catholic, so unexcluding.

I confess that it moves my spleen to see these *things in books' clothing* perched upon shelves, like false saints, usurpers of true shrines, intruders into the sanctuary, thrusting out the legitimate occupants. To reach down a well-bound semblance of a volume, and hope it some kind-hearted play-book, then, opening what "seem its leaves," to come bolt upon a withering Population Essay. To expect a Steele or a Farquhar, and find—Adam Smith. To view a well-arranged assortment of block-headed Encyclopædias (Anglicanas or Metropolitanas) set out in an array of russia, or morocco, when a tithe of that good leather would comfortably re-clothe my shivering folios, would

[39] translated in the preceding phrase.

renovate Paracelsus himself, and enable old Raymund Lully to look like himself again in the world. I never see these impostors, but I long to strip them, to warm my ragged veterans in their spoils.

To be strong-backed and neat-bound is the desideratum of a volume. Magnificence comes after. This, when it can be afforded, is not to be lavished upon all kinds of books indiscriminately. I would not dress a set of magazines, for instance, in full suit. The dishabille, or half binding (with russia blacks ever) is *our* costume. A Shakespeare or a Milton (unless the first editions), it were mere foppery to trick out in gay apparel. The possession of them confers no distinction. The exterior of them (the things themselves being so common), strange to say, raises no sweet emotions, no tickling sense of property in the owner. Thomson's *Seasons*, again, looks best (I maintain it) a little torn and dog's-eared. How beautiful to a genuine lover of reading are the sullied leaves, and worn-out appearance, nay, the very odour (beyond russia), if we would not forget kind feelings in fastidiousness, of an old "Circulating Library" *Tom Jones*, or *Vicar of Wakefield!* How they speak of the thousand thumbs that have turned over their pages with delight! —of the lone sempstress, whom they may have cheered (milliner, or hard-working mantua-maker[40]) after her long day's needle-toil, running far into midnight, when she has snatched an hour, ill spared from sleep, to steep her cares, as in some Lethean cup, in spelling out their enchanting contents! Who would have them a whit less soiled? What better condition could we desire to see them in?

In some respects the better a book is, the less it demands from binding. Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, and all that class of perpetually self-reproductive volumes—Great Nature's Stereotypes—we see them individually perish with less regret, because

[40] dress-maker.

we know the copies of them to be "eterne." But where a book is at once both good and rare—where the individual is almost the species, and when *that* perishes,

> We know not where is that Promethean torch
> That can its light relumine,— [41]

such a book, for instance, as the *Life of the Duke of Newcastle,* by his Duchess—no casket is rich enough, no casing sufficiently durable, to honour and keep safe such a jewel.

Not only rare volumes of this description, which seem hopeless ever to be reprinted, but old editions of writers, such as Sir Philip Sidney, Bishop Taylor, Milton in his prose works, Fuller—of whom we *have* reprints, yet the books themselves, though they go about, and are talked of here and there, we know have not endenizened themselves (nor possibly ever will) in the national heart, so as to become stock books—it is good to possess these in good and costly covers. I do not care for a First Folio of Shakespeare. (You cannot make a *pet* book of an author whom everybody reads.) I rather prefer the common editions of Rowe and Tonson, without notes, and with *plates,* which, being so execrably bad, serve as maps or modest remembrancers, to the text; and, without pretending to any supposable emulation with it, are so much better than the Shakespeare gallery engravings which *did.* I have a community of feeling with my countrymen about his Plays, and I like those editions of him best which have been oftenest tumbled about and handled. On the contrary I cannot read Beaumont and Fletcher but in Folio. The Octavo editions are painful to look at, I have no sympathy with them. If they were as much read as the current editions of the other poet, I should prefer them in that shape to the older one. I do not know

[41] adapted from *Othello.*

a more heartless sight than the reprint of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*. What need was there of unearthing the bones of that fantastic old great man, to expose them in a winding-sheet of the newest fashion to modern censure? what hapless stationer could dream of Burton ever becoming popular? The wretched Malone[42] could not do worse, when he bribed the sexton of Stratford Church to let him whitewash the painted effigy of old Shakespeare, which stood there, in rude but lively fashion depicted, to the very colour of the cheek, the eye, the eyebrow, hair, the very dress he used to wear—the only authentic testimony we had, however imperfect, of these curious parts and parcels of him. They covered him over with a coat of white paint. By—, if I had been a justice of peace for Warwickshire, I would have clapt both commentator and sexton fast in the stocks, for a pair of meddling sacrilegious varlets.

I think I see them at their work—these sapient trouble-tombs.

Shall I be thought fantastical if I confess that the names of some of our poets sound sweeter, and have a finer relish to the ear—to mine, at least—than that of Milton or of Shakespeare? It may be that the latter are more staled and rung upon in common discourse. The sweetest names, and which carry a perfume in the mention, are Kit Marlowe, Drayton, Drummond of Hawthornden, and Cowley.

Much depends upon *when* and *where* you read a book. In the five or six impatient minutes, before the dinner is quite ready, who would think of taking up the *Fairy Queen* for a stop-gap, or a volume of Bishop Andrewes' sermons?

Milton almost requires a solemn service of music to be played before you enter upon him. But he brings his music, to which, who listens, had need bring docile thoughts, and purged ears.

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[42] Edmund Malone, Shakespearean scholar and critic.

Winter evenings,—the world shut out—with less of ceremony the gentle Shakespeare enters. At such a season the *Tempest,* or his own *Winter's Tale.*

These two poets you cannot avoid reading aloud—to yourself, or (as it chances) to some single person listening. More than one—and it degenerates into an audience.

Books of quick interest, that hurry on for incidents, are for the eye to glide over only. It will not do to read them out. I could never listen to even the better kind of modern novels without extreme irksomeness.

A newspaper, read out, is intolerable. In some of the Bank offices it is the custom (to save so much individual time) for one of the clerks—who is the best scholar—to commence upon the *Times* or the *Chronicle* and recite its entire contents aloud, *pro bono publico.*[43] With every advantage of lungs and elocution, the effect is singularly vapid. In barbers' shops and public-houses, a fellow will get up and spell out a paragraph, which he communicates as some discovery. Another follows, with *his* selection. So the entire journal transpires at length by piecemeal. Seldom-readers are slow readers, and without this expedient, no one in the company would probably ever travel through the contents of a whole paper.

Newspapers always excite curiosity. No one ever lays one down without a feeling of disappointment.

What an eternal time that gentleman in black, at Nando's, keeps the paper! I am sick of hearing the waiter bawling out incessantly, "The *Chronicle* is in hand, Sir."

(As in these little diurnals I generally skip the Foreign News, the Debates and the Politics, I find the *Morning Herald* by far the most entertaining of them. It is an agreeable miscellany rather than a newspaper.)

Coming into an inn at night—having ordered your supper—

[43] for the public good.

what can be more delightful than to find lying in the window-seat, left there time out of mind by the carelessness of some former guest—two or three numbers of the old Town and Country Magazine, with its amusing *tête-à-tête* pictures—"The Royal Lover and Lady G—," "The Melting Platonic and the old Beau,"—and suchlike antiquated scandal? Would you exchange it—at that time, and in that place—for a better book?

Poor Tobin,[44] who latterly fell blind, did not regret it so much for the weightier kinds of reading—the *Paradise Lost*, or *Comus*, he could have *read* to him—but he missed the pleasure of skimming over with his own eye a magazine, or a light pamphlet.

I should not care to be caught in the serious avenues of some cathedral alone, and reading *Candide*.

I do not remember a more whimsical surprise than having been once detected—by a familiar damsel—reclined at my ease upon the grass, on Primrose Hill (her Cythera), reading—*Pamela*. There was nothing in the book to make a man seriously ashamed at the exposure; but as she seated herself down by me, and seemed determined to read in company, I could have wished it had been—any other book. We read on very sociably for a few pages; and, not finding the author much to her taste, she got up, and—went away. Gentle casuist, I leave it to thee to conjecture, whether the blush (for there was one between us) was the property of the nymph or the swain in this dilemma. From me you shall never get the secret.

I am not much of a friend to out-of-doors reading. I cannot settle my spirits to it. I knew a Unitarian minister, who was generally to be seen upon Snow Hill (as yet Skinner's Street *was not*), between the hours of ten and eleven in the morning, studying a volume of Lardner. I own this to have been a strain of abstraction beyond my reach. I used to admire how

[44] John Tobin, a dramatist.

he sidled along, keeping clear of secular contacts. An illiterate encounter with a porter's knot, or a bread-basket, would have quickly put to flight all the theology I am master of, and have left me worse than indifferent to the five points.[45]

There is a class of street readers, whom I can never contemplate without affection—the poor gentry, who, not having wherewithal to buy or hire a book, filch a little learning at the open stalls—the owner, with his hard eye, casting envious looks at them all the while, and thinking when they will have done. Venturing tenderly, page after page, expecting every moment when he shall interpose his interdict, and yet unable to deny themselves the gratification, they "snatch a fearful joy." Martin B—[46] in this way, by daily fragments, got through two volumes of *Clarissa*, when the stall-keeper damped his laudable ambition, by asking him (it was in his younger days) whether he meant to purchase the work. M. declares that under no circumstance in his life did he ever peruse a book with half the satisfaction which he took in those uneasy snatches. A quaint poetess[47] of our day has moralized upon this subject in two very touching but homely stanzas:

I saw a boy with eager eye
Open a book upon a stall,
And read, as he'd devour it all;
Which, when the stall-man did espy,
Soon to the boy I heard him call,
"You, sir, you never buy a book,
Therefore in one you shall not look."
The boy pass'd slowly on, and with a sigh
He wish'd he never had been taught to read,
Then of the old churl's books he should have had no need.

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[45] the essential doctrines of Calvinism.
[46] Martin Burney, an intimate friend.
[47] Lamb's sister, Mary.

Of sufferings the poor have many,
Which never can the rich annoy.
I soon perceived another boy,
Who look'd as if he had not any
Food, for that day at least,—enjoy
The sight of cold meat in a tavern larder.
This boy's case, then thought I, is surely harder,
Thus hungry, longing, thus without a penny,
Beholding choice of dainty-dressed meat:
No wonder if he wished he ne'er had learn'd to eat.

De Quincey

De Quincey

(1785-1859)

AMONG THE ESSAYISTS of the early nineteenth century, Thomas De Quincey suggests, on one side of his work at least, the closest parallel to the writer that several of his contemporaries so fervently admired, Sir Thomas Browne. In any comparison with such a model, however, De Quincey unquestionably suffers. If he has something of Browne's genius for rhythm and balance of phrase, for jewelled and gorgeously ornamented language, he lacks sustained ability to make the matter of his writing worthy of its manner. Too often he creates the impression of building sound effects for their own sake—the pitfall that obviously yawns for the writer whose interest is preëminently in style. He has other deficiencies that keep him from quite the first rank among essayists—a rather childish brand of humor, for example, and an unfortunate habit of displaying his learning in inappropriate places. "Levana," save for the occasional but all too typical pedantry of its etymological notes, exhibits the author in an unusually favorable light as a personal essayist. Its haunting spell is as undeniable as its sincerity is manifest. There is nothing else of his, however, that quite parallels this essay. De Quincey ordinarily writes at far greater length and far more diffusively. Nevertheless, the opium-eater will not soon be forgotten; and he will be remembered, as he hoped to be, for his "impassioned," lyrical prose. These unearthy harmonies are his unique legacy to English letters.

Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow [1]

OFTENTIMES at Oxford I saw Levana in my dreams. I knew her by her Roman symbols. Who is Levana? Reader, that do not pretend to have leisure for very much scholarship, you will not be angry with me for telling you.

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[1] published in *Blackwood's* for June 1845, and reprinted as part of *Suspiria de Profundis* ("Sighs from the Depths").

Levana was the Roman goddess that performed for the new-born infant the earliest office of ennobling kindness—typical, by its mode, of that grandeur which belongs to man every-where, and of that benignity in powers invisible which even in Pagan worlds sometimes descends to sustain it. At the very moment of birth, just as the infant tasted for the first time the atmosphere of our troubled planet, it was laid on the ground. *That* might bear different interpretations. But immediately, lest so grand a creature should grovel there for more than one instant, either the paternal hand, as proxy for the goddess Levana, or some near kinsman, as proxy for the father, raised it upright, bade it look erect as the king of all this world, and presented its forehead to the stars, saying, per-haps, in his heart, "Behold what is greater than yourselves!" This symbolic act represented the function of Levana. And that mysterious lady, who never revealed her face (except to me in dreams), but always acted by delegation, had her name from the Latin verb (as still it is the Italian verb) *levare,* to raise aloft.

This is the explanation of Levana. And hence it has arisen that some people have understood by Levana the tutelary power that controls the education of the nursery. She, that would not suffer at his birth even a prefigurative or mimic degradation for her awful ward, far less could be supposed to suffer the real degradation attaching to the non-develop-ment of his powers. She therefore watches over human edu-cation. Now, the word *edŭco,* with the penultimate short, was derived (by a process often exemplified in the crystallisation of languages) from the word *edūco,* with the penultimate long. Whatsoever *educes* or develops—*educates.* By the education of Levana, therefore, is meant—not the poor machinery that moves by spelling-books and grammars, but that mighty sys-tem of central forces hidden in the deep bosom of human life, which by passion, by strife, by temptation, by the energies of re-

sistance, works for ever upon children—resting not day or night, any more than the mighty wheel of day and night themselves, whose moments, like restless spokes, are glimmering for ever as they revolve.

If, then, *these* are the ministries by which Levana works, how profoundly must she reverence the agencies of grief! But you, reader, think that children generally are not liable to grief such as mine. There are two senses in the word *generally* —the sense of Euclid where it means *universally* (or in the whole extent of the *genus*), and a foolish sense of this world, where it means *usually*. Now I am far from saying that children universally are capable of grief like mine. But there are more than you ever heard of, who die of grief in this island of ours. I will tell you a common case. The rules of Eton require that a boy on the *foundation* should be there twelve years: he is superannuated [2] at eighteen, consequently he must come at six. Children torn away from mothers and sisters at that age not unfrequently die. I speak of what I know. The complaint is not entered by the registrar as grief; but *that* it is. Grief of that sort, and at that age, has killed more than ever have been counted amongst its martyrs.

Therefore it is that Levana often communes with the powers that shake man's heart: therefore it is that she dotes upon grief. "These ladies," said I softly to myself, on seeing the ministers with whom Levana was conversing, "these are the Sorrows; and they are three in number, as the *Graces* are three, who dress man's life with beauty; the *Parcae* [3] are three, who weave the dark arras of man's life in their mysterious loom always with colours sad in part, sometimes angry with tragic crimson and black; the *Furies* are three, who visit with retributions called from the other side of the grave offences that walk

[2] required to leave because of age. But there seems to have been no rule requiring a residence of twelve years.
[3] the Fates.

upon this; and once even the *Muses* were but three, who fit the harp, the trumpet, or the lute, to the great burdens of man's impassioned creations. These are the Sorrows, all three of whom I know." The last words I say *now;* but in Oxford I said—"one of whom I know,[4] and the others too surely I *shall* know." For already, in my fervent youth, I saw (dimly relieved upon the dark background of my dreams) the imperfect lineaments of the awful sisters. These sisters—by what name shall we call them?

If I say simply—"The Sorrows," there will be a chance of mistaking the term; it might be understood of individual sorrow—separate cases of sorrow,—whereas I want a term expressing the mighty abstractions that incarnate themselves in all individual sufferings of man's heart; and I wish to have these abstractions presented as impersonations, that is, as clothed with human attributes of life, and with functions pointing to flesh. Let us call them, therefore, *Our Ladies of Sorrow.* I know them thoroughly, and have walked in all their kingdoms. Three sisters they are, of one mysterious household; and their paths are wide apart; but of their dominion there is no end. Them I saw often conversing with Levana, and sometimes about myself. Do they talk, then? Oh, no! Mighty phantoms like these disdain the infirmities of language. They may utter voices through the organs of man when they dwell in human hearts, but amongst themselves is no voice nor sound—eternal silence reigns in *their* kingdoms. *They* spoke not as they talked with Levana. *They* whispered not. *They* sang not. Though oftentimes methought they *might* have sung; for I upon earth had heard their mysteries oftentimes deciphered by harp and timbrel, by dulcimer and organ. Like God, whose servants they are, they utter their pleasure, not by sounds that perish,

[4] Our Lady of Tears. De Quincey alludes to the fact that his father and two sisters died while he was still a young boy.

or by words that go astray, but by signs in heaven—by changes on earth—by pulses in secret rivers—heraldries painted on darkness—and hieroglyphics written on the tablets of the brain. *They* wheeled in mazes; *I* spelled the steps. *They* telegraphed from afar; *I* read the signals. *They* conspired together; and on the mirrors of darkness *my* eye traced the plots. *Theirs* were the symbols,—*mine* are the words.

What is it the sisters are? What is it that they do? Let me describe their form, and their presence; if form it were that still fluctuated in its outline; or presence it were that for ever advanced to the front, or for ever receded amongst shades.

The eldest of the three is named *Mater Lachrymarum*, Our Lady of Tears. She it is that night and day raves and moans, calling for vanished faces. She stood in Rama,[5] where a voice was heard of lamentation—Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted. She it was that stood in Bethlehem on the night when Herod's sword swept its nurseries of Innocents, and the little feet were stiffened for ever, which, heard at times as they tottered along floors overhead, woke pulses of love in household hearts that were not unmarked in heaven.

Her eyes are sweet and subtle, wild and sleepy by turns; oftentimes rising to the clouds, oftentimes challenging the heavens. She wears a diadem round her head. And I knew by childish memories that she could go abroad upon the winds, when she heard the sobbing of litanies or the thundering of organs, and when she beheld the mustering of summer clouds. This sister, the elder, it is that carries keys more than papal at her girdle, which open every cottage and every palace. She, to my knowledge, sate all last summer by the bedside of the blind beggar, him that so often and so gladly I talked with, whose pious daughter, eight years old, with the sunny counte-

[5] cf. *Jeremiah* XXXI, 15.

nance, resisted the temptations of play and village mirth to travel all day long on dusty roads with her afflicted father. For this did God send her a great reward. In the springtime of the year, and whilst yet her own spring was budding, He recalled her to Himself. But her blind father mourns for ever over *her;* still he dreams at midnight that the little guiding hand is locked within his own; and still he wakens to a darkness that is *now* within a second and a deeper darkness. This *Mater Lachrymarum* also has been sitting all this winter of 1844-5 within the bedchamber of the Czar, bringing before his eyes a daughter (not less pious) that vanished to God not less suddenly, and left behind her a darkness not less profound.[6] By the power of her keys it is that Our Lady of Tears glides a ghostly intruder into the chambers of sleepless men, sleepless women, sleepless children, from Ganges to the Nile, from Nile to Mississippi. And her, because she is the first-born of her house, and has the widest empire, let us honour with the title of "Madonna."

The second sister is called *Mater Suspiriorum,* Our Lady of Sighs. She never scales the clouds, nor walks abroad upon the winds. She wears no diadem. And her eyes, if they were ever seen, would be neither sweet nor subtle; no man could read their story; they would be found filled with perishing dreams, and with wrecks of forgotten delirium. But she raises not her eyes; her head, on which sits a dilapidated turban, droops for ever; for ever fastens on the dust. She weeps not. She groans not. But she sighs inaudibly at intervals. Her sister, Madonna, is oftentimes stormy and frantic; raging in the highest against heaven; and demanding back her darlings. But Our Lady of Sighs never clamours, never defies, dreams not of rebellious aspirations. She is humble to abjectness. Hers is the meekness that belongs to the hopeless. Murmur she may, but it

[6] The princess Alexandra, daughter of Czar Nicholas I, died in August 1844.

is in her sleep. Whisper she may, but it is to herself in the twilight. Mutter she does at times, but it is in solitary places that are desolate as she is desolate, in ruined cities, and when the sun has gone down to his rest. This sister is the visitor of the Pariah, of the Jew, of the bondsman to the oar in Mediterranean galleys, of the English criminal in Norfolk Island,[7] blotted out from the books of remembrance in sweet far-off England, of the baffled penitent reverting his eyes for ever upon a solitary grave, which to him seems the altar overthrown of some past and bloody sacrifice, on which altar no oblations can now be availing, whether towards pardon that he might implore, or towards reparation that he might attempt. Every slave that at noonday looks up to the tropical sun with timid reproach, as he points with one hand to the earth, our general mother, but for *him* a stepmother, as he points with the other hand to the Bible, our general teacher, but against *him* sealed and sequestered;—every woman sitting in darkness, without love to shelter her head, or hope to illumine her solitude, because the heaven-born instincts kindling in her nature germs of holy affections, which God implanted in her womanly bosom, having been stifled by social necessities, now burn sullenly to waste, like sepulchral lamps amongst the ancients;—every nun defrauded of her unreturning May-time by wicked kinsmen, whom God will judge;—every captive in every dungeon;—all that are betrayed, and all that are rejected; outcasts by traditionary law, and children of *hereditary* disgrace—all these walk with Our Lady of Sighs. She also carries a key; but she needs it little. For her kingdom is chiefly amongst the tents of Shem,[8] and the houseless vagrant of every clime. Yet in the very highest ranks of man she finds chapels of her own; and even in glorious England there are some that, to the world,

[7] off the coast of Australia; at this time a penal colony.
[8] i. e., among homeless outcasts.

carry their heads as proudly as the reindeer, who yet secretly have received her mark upon their foreheads.

But the third sister, who is also the youngest!—Hush! whisper, whilst we talk of *her!* Her kingdom is not large, or else no flesh should live; but within that kingdom all power is hers. Her head, turreted like that of Cybele, rises almost beyond the reach of sight. She droops not; and her eyes rising so high, *might* be hidden by distance. But, being what they are, they cannot be hidden; through the treble veil of crape which she wears, the fierce light of a blazing misery, that rests not for matins or for vespers—for noon of day or noon of night—for ebbing or for flowing tide—may be read from the very ground. She is the defier of God. She also is the mother of lunacies, and the suggestress of suicides. Deep lie the roots of her power; but narrow is the nation that she rules. For she can approach only those in whom a profound nature has been upheaved by central convulsions; in whom the heart trembles and the brain rocks under conspiracies of tempest from without and tempest from within. Madonna moves with uncertain steps, fast or slow, but still with tragic grace. Our Lady of Sighs creeps timidly and stealthily. But this youngest sister moves with incalculable motions, bounding, and with a tiger's leaps. She carries no key; for, though coming rarely amongst men, she storms all doors at which she is permitted to enter at all. And *her* name is *Mater Tenebrarum*—Our Lady of Darkness.

These were the *Semnai Theai,*[9] or Sublime Goddesses; these were the *Eumenides* [10] or Gracious Ladies (so called by antiquity in shuddering propitiation)—of my Oxford dreams. Madonna spoke. She spoke by her mysterious hand. Touching my head, she beckoned to Our Lady of Sighs; and *what* she spoke, trans-

[9] Holy Goddesses.
[10] Well-disposed Ones. Both terms are, as De Quincey indicates, euphemisms for the Furies.

lated out of the signs which (except in dreams) no man reads, was this:—

"Lo! here is he whom in childhood I dedicated to my altars. This is he that once I made my darling. Him I led astray, him I beguiled, and from heaven I stole away his young heart to mine. Through me did he become idolatrous; and through me it was, by languishing desires, that he worshipped the worm, and prayed to the wormy grave. Holy was the grave to him; lovely was its darkness; saintly its corruption. Him, this young idolater, I have seasoned for thee, dear gentle Sister of Sighs! Do thou take him now to *thy* heart, and season him for our dreadful sister. And thou"—turning to the *Mater Tenebrarum*, she said—"wicked sister, that temptest and hatest, do thou take him from *her*. See that thy sceptre lie heavy on his head. Suffer not woman and her tenderness to sit near him in his darkness. Banish the frailties of hope—wither the relentings of love—scorch the fountains of tears: curse him as only thou canst curse. So shall he be accomplished in the furnace—so shall he see the things that ought *not* to be seen—sights that are abominable, and secrets that are unutterable. So shall he read elder truths, sad truths, grand truths, fearful truths. So shall he rise again *before* he dies. And so shall our commission be accomplished which from God we had—to plague his heart until we had unfolded the capacities of his spirit."

Thackeray

Thackeray

(1811-1863)

William Makepeace Thackeray is, like his master, Henry Fielding, both a great novelist and an excellent essayist. The essays emphasize a trait of Thackeray that is present in the novels also, occasionally—so at least some readers feel—to their detriment. This is his fondness for chatting informally with the reader or, sometimes, lecturing him. "Does he not stop perpetually in his story and begin to preach to you? When he ought to be engaged with business, is he not forever taking the Muse by the sleeve, and plaguing her with some of his cynical sermons?"—so does Thackeray, in "De Finibus," confess his sins as a novelist. Whatever may be said of its place in the novel, this direct appeal to the reader is of course the normal method of the familiar essay. And Thackeray *is* a charming essayist. The "cynical sermons," it need scarcely be said, are to be understood, in Lamb's phrase, "with some abatement." Though the author finds a deplorable amount of sham and pretension in the world, his is rather the attitude of the genial and tolerant satirist than that of the bitter and disillusioned cynic. The *Roundabout Papers* are perhaps at their best when their subject is most nearly autobiographical; reminiscences of boyhood, experiences as an author and an editor form some of their most attractive themes. In "De Finibus," with its candid revelation of Thackeray's attitude toward his work and of his tastes in reading, we seem peculiarly close to that kindly gentleman, the author.

On Being Found Out

AT THE close (let us say) of Queen Anne's reign, when I was a boy at a private and preparatory school for young gentlemen, I remember the wiseacre of a master ordering us all, one night, to march into a little garden at the back of the house, and thence to proceed one by one into a tool- or hen-house (I was but a tender little thing just put into short

clothes, and can't exactly say whether the house was for tools or hens), and in that house to put our hands into a sack which stood on a bench, a candle burning beside it. I put my hand into the sack. My hand came out quite black. I went and joined the other boys in the schoolroom; and all their hands were black too.

By reason of my tender age (and there are some critics who, I hope, will be satisfied by my acknowledging that I am a hundred and fifty-six next birthday) I could not understand what was the meaning of this night excursion—this candle, this tool-house, this bag of soot. I think we little boys were taken out of our sleep to be brought to the ordeal. We came, then, and showed our little hands to the master; washed them or not—most probably, I should say, not—and so went bewildered back to bed.

Something had been stolen in the school that day; and Mr. Wiseacre having read in a book of an ingenious method of finding out a thief by making him put his hand into a sack (which, if guilty, the rogue would shirk from doing), all we boys were subjected to the trial. Goodness knows what the lost object was, or who stole it. We all had black hands to show to the master. And the thief, whoever he was, was not Found Out that time.

I wonder if the rascal is alive—an elderly scoundrel he must be by this time; and a hoary old hypocrite, to whom an old schoolfellow presents his kindest regards—parenthetically remarking what a dreadful place that private school was: cold, chilblains, bad dinners, not enough victuals, and caning awful! —Are you alive still, I say, you nameless villain, who escaped discovery on that day of crime? I hope you have escaped often since, old sinner. Ah, what a lucky thing it is, for you and me, my man, that we are *not* found out in all our peccadilloes; and that our backs can slip away from the master and the cane!

Just consider what life would be, if every rogue was found out, and flogged *coram populo!*[1] What a butchery, what an indecency, what an endless swishing of the rod! Don't cry out about my misanthropy. My good friend Mealymouth, I will trouble you to tell me, do you go to church? When there, do you say, or do you not, that you are a miserable sinner? and saying so, do you believe or disbelieve it? If you are a M. S., don't you deserve correction, and aren't you grateful if you are to be let off? I say, again, what a blessed thing it is that we are not all found out!

Just picture to yourself everybody who does wrong being found out, and punished accordingly. Fancy all the boys in all the school being whipped; and then the assistants, and then the head master (Doctor Badford let us call him). Fancy the provost-marshal being tied up, having previously superintended the correction of the whole army. After the young gentlemen have had their turn for the faulty exercises, fancy Doctor Lincolnsinn being taken up for certain faults in *his* Essay and Review. After the clergyman has cried his peccavi,[2] suppose we hoist up a Bishop, and give him a couple of dozen! (I see my Lord Bishop of Double-Gloucester sitting in a very uneasy posture on his right reverend bench.) After we have cast off the Bishop, what are we to say to the Minister who appointed him? My Lord Cinqwarden, it is painful to have to use personal correction to a boy of your age; but really . . . *Siste tandem, carnifex!*[3] The butchery is too horrible. The hand drops powerless, appalled at the quantity of birch which it must cut and brandish. I am glad we are not all found out, I say again; and protest, my dear brethren, against our having our deserts.

To fancy all men found out and punished is bad enough;

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[1] in the presence of the people.
[2] confessed his sin. (*peccavi*, literally, is "I have sinned.")
[3] Cease, executioner!

but imagine all women found out in the distinguished social circle in which you and I have the honour to move. Is it not a mercy that so many of these fair criminals remain unpunished and undiscovered? There is Mrs. Longbow, who is for ever practising, and who shoots poisoned arrows, too; when you meet her you don't call her liar, and charge her with the wickedness she has done, and is doing. There is Mrs. Painter, who passes for a most respectable woman, and a model in society. There is no use in saying what you really know regarding her and her goings on. There is Diana Hunter—what a little haughty prude it is; and yet *we* know stories about her which are not altogether edifying. I say it is best, for the sake of the good, that the bad should not all be found out. You don't want your children to know the history of that lady in the next box, who is so handsome, and whom they admire so. Ah me! what would life be if we were all found out, and punished for all our faults? Jack Ketch [4] would be in permanence; and then who would hang Jack Ketch?

They talk of murderers being pretty certainly found out. Psha! I have heard an authority awfully competent vow and declare that scores and hundreds of murders are committed, and nobody is the wiser. That terrible man mentioned one or two ways of committing murder, which he maintained were quite common, and were scarcely ever found out. A man, for instance, comes home to his wife, and . . . but I pause—I know that this Magazine has a very large circulation. Hundreds and hundreds of thousands—why not say a million of people at once?—well, say a million read it. And amongst these countless readers, I might be teaching some monster how to make away with his wife without being found out, some fiend of a woman how to destroy her dear husband. I will *not* then tell this easy and simple way of murder, as communi-

[4] an executioner whose name has become the stock equivalent of "hangman."

cated to me by a most respectable party in the confidence of private intercourse. Suppose some gentle reader were to try this most simple and easy receipt—it seems to me almost infallible—and come to grief in consequence, and be found out and hanged? Should I ever pardon myself for having been the means of doing injury to a single one of our esteemed subscribers? The prescription whereof I speak—that is to say whereof I *don't* speak—shall be buried in this bosom. No, I am a humane man. I am not one of your Bluebeards to go and say to my wife, "My dear! I am going away for a few days to Brighton. Here are all the keys of the house. You may open every door and closet, except the one at the end of the oak-room opposite the fireplace, with the little bronze Shakspeare on the mantelpiece (or what not)." I don't say this to a woman—unless, to be sure, I want to get rid of her—because, after such a caution, I know she'll peep into the closet. I say nothing about the closet at all. I keep the key in my pocket, and a being whom I love, who, as I know, has many weaknesses, out of harm's way. You toss up your head, dear angel, drub on the ground with your lovely little feet, on the table with your sweet rosy fingers, and cry, "Oh, sneerer! You don't know the depth of woman's feeling, the lofty scorn of all deceit, the entire absence of mean curiosity in the sex, or never, never would you libel us so!" Ah, Delia! dear, dear Delia! It is because I fancy I *do* know something about you (not all, mind—no, no; no man knows that)—Ah, my bride, my ringdove, my rose, my poppet—choose, in fact, whatever name you like—bulbul of my grove, fountain of my desert, sunshine of my darkling life, and joy of my dungeoned existence, it is because I *do* know a little about you that I conclude to say nothing of that private closet, and keep my key in my pocket. You take away that closet-key then, and the house-key. You lock Delia in. You keep her out of harm's way and gadding, and so she never *can* be found out.

And yet by little strange accidents and coincidences how we are being found out every day. You remember that old story of the Abbé Kakatoes,[5] who told the company at supper one night how the first confession he ever received was—from a murderer let us say. Presently enters to supper the Marquis de Croquemitaine.[5] "Palsambleu,[6] abbé!" says the brilliant Marquis, taking a pinch of snuff, "are you here? Gentlemen and ladies! I was the abbé's first penitent, and I made him a confession which I promise you astonished him."

To be sure how queerly things are found out! Here is an instance. Only the other day I was writing in these *Roundabout Papers* about a certain man, whom I facetiously called Baggs, and who had abused me to my friends, who of course told me. Shortly after that paper was published another friend—Sacks let us call him—scowls fiercely at me as I am sitting in perfect good-humour at the club, and passes on without speaking. A cut. A quarrel. Sacks thinks it is about him that I was writing: whereas, upon my honour and conscience, I never had him once in my mind, and was pointing my moral from quite another man. But don't you see, by this wrath of the guilty-conscienced Sacks, that he had been abusing me too? He has owned himself guilty, never having been accused. He has winced when nobody thought of hitting him. I did but put the cap out, and madly butting and chafing, behold my friend rushes to put his head into it! Never mind, Sacks, you are found out; but I bear you no malice, my man.

And yet to be found out, I know from my own experience, must be painful and odious, and cruelly mortifying to the inward vanity. Suppose I am a poltroon, let us say. With fierce moustache, loud talk, plentiful oaths, and an immense stick, I keep up nevertheless a character for courage. I swear fearfully

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[5] literally, "cuckatoo" and "bugbear"; as proper names, of Thackeray's coinage.
[6] corrupted from *par le sang Dieu*; an old-fashioned French oath.

at cabmen and women; brandish my bludgeon, and perhaps knock down a little man or two with it; brag of the images which I break at the shooting-gallery, and pass amongst my friends for a whiskery fire-eater, afraid of neither man nor dragon. Ah me! Suppose some brisk little chap steps up and gives me a caning in St. James's Street, with all the heads of my friends looking out of all the club windows. My reputation is gone. I frighten no man more. My nose is pulled by whipper-snappers, who jump up on a chair to reach it. I am found out. And in the days of my triumphs, when people were yet afraid of me, and were taken in by my swagger, I always knew that I was a lily-liver, and expected that I should be found out some day.

That certainty of being found out must haunt and depress many a bold braggadocio spirit. Let us say it is a clergyman, who can pump copious floods of tears out of his own eyes and those of his audience. He thinks to himself, "I am but a poor swindling, chattering rogue. My bills are unpaid. I have jilted several women whom I have promised to marry. I don't know whether I believe what I preach, and I know I have stolen the very sermon over which I have been snivelling. Have they found me out?" says he, as his head drops down on the cushion.

Then your writer, poet, historian, novelist, or what not? The *Beacon* says that "Jones's work is one of the first order." The *Lamp* declares that "Jones's tragedy surpasses every work since the days of Him of Avon." The *Comet* asserts that "J.'s *Life of Goody Two-shoes* is a κτῆμα ἐς ἀεὶ,[7] a noble and enduring monument to the fame of that admirable Englishwoman," and so forth. But then Jones knows that he has lent the critic of the *Beacon* five pounds; that his publisher has a half-share in the *Lamp;* and that the *Comet* comes repeatedly to dine with

[7] a possession for ever.

him. It is all very well. Jones is immortal until he is found out; and then down comes the extinguisher, and the immortal is dead and buried. The idea (*dies iræ*[8]*!*) of discovery must haunt many a man, and make him uneasy, as the trumpets are puffing in his triumph. Brown, who has a higher place than he deserves, cowers before Smith, who has found him out. What is a chorus of critics shouting "Bravo"?—a public clapping hands and flinging garlands? Brown knows that Smith has found him out. Puff, trumpets! Wave, banners! Huzza, boys, for the immortal Brown! "This is all very well," B. thinks (bowing the while, smiling, laying his hand to his heart); "but there stands Smith at the window: *he* has measured me; and some day the others will find me out too." It is a very curious sensation to sit by a man who has found you out, and who you know has found you out; or, *vice versâ*, to sit with a man whom *you* have found out. His talent? Bah! His virtue? We know a little story or two about his virtue, and he knows we know it. We are thinking over friend Robinson's antecedents, as we grin, bow, and talk; and we are both humbugs together. Robinson a good fellow, is he? You know how he behaved to Hicks? A good-natured man, is he? Pray do you remember that little story of Mrs. Robinson's black eye? How men have to work, to talk, to smile, to go to bed, and try to sleep, with this dread of being found out on their consciences! Bardolph, who has robbed a church, and Nym, who has taken a purse, go to their usual haunts, and smoke their pipes with their companions. Mr. Detective Bulls-eye appears, and says, "Oh, Bardolph, I want you about that there pyx business!" Mr. Bardolph knocks the ashes out of his pipe, puts out his hands to the little steel cuffs, and walks away quite meekly. He is found out. He must go. "Good-bye,

[8] judgment day (literally, day of wrath).

Doll Tearsheet! Good-bye, Mrs. Quickly,[9] ma'am!" The other gentlemen and ladies *de la société* [10] look on and exchange mute adieux with the departing friends. And an assured time will come when the other gentlemen and ladies will be found out too.

What a wonderful and beautiful provision of nature it has been that, for the most part, our womankind are not endowed with the faculty of finding us out! *They* don't doubt, and probe, and weigh, and take your measure. Lay down this paper, my benevolent friend and reader, go into your drawing-room now, and utter a joke ever so old, and I wager sixpence the ladies there will all begin to laugh. Go to Brown's house, and tell Mrs. Brown and the young ladies what you think of him, and see what a welcome you will get! In like manner, let him come to your house, and tell *your* good lady his candid opinion of you, and fancy how she will receive him! Would you have your wife and children know you exactly for what you are, and esteem you precisely at your worth? If so, my friend, you will live in a dreary house, and you will have but a chilly fireside. Do you suppose the people round it don't see your homely face as under a glamour, and, as it were, with a halo of love round it? You don't fancy you *are*, as you seem to them? No such thing, my man. Put away that monstrous conceit, and be thankful that *they* have not found you out.

De Finibus [11]

WHEN Swift was in love with Stella, and despatching her a letter from London thrice a month, by the Irish packet, you may remember how he would begin Letter No. xxiii, we will

[9] These four are disreputable acquaintances of Falstaff's, in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* or *Henry V*.
[10] of the company.
[11] "Concerning Endings."

say, on the very day when xxii had been sent away, stealing out of the coffee-house or the assembly so as to be able to prattle with his dear; "never letting go her kind hand, as it were," as some commentator[12] or other has said in speaking of the Dean and his amour. When Mr. Johnson, walking to Dodsley's, and touching the posts in Pall Mall as he walked, forgot to pat the head of one of them, he went back and imposed his hands on it,—impelled I know not by what superstition. I have this I hope not dangerous mania too. As soon as a piece of work is out of hand, and before going to sleep, I like to begin another; it may be to write only half-a-dozen lines: but that is something towards Number the Next. The printer's boy has not yet reached Green Arbour Court[13] with the copy. Those people who were alive half-an-hour since, Pendennis, Clive Newcome, and (what do you call him? what was the name of the last hero? I remember now!) Philip Firmin,[14] have hardly drunk their glass of wine, and the mammas have only this minute got the children's cloaks on, and have been bowed out of my premises—and here I come back to the study again: *tamen usque recurro*.[15] How lonely it looks now all these people are gone! My dear good friends, some folk are utterly tired of you, and say, "What a poverty of friends the man has! He is always asking us to meet those Pendennises, Newcomes, and so forth. Why does he not introduce us to some new characters? Why is he not thrilling like Twostars, learned and profound like Threestars, exquisitely humorous and human like Fourstars? Why, finally, is he not somebody else?" My good people, it is not only impossible to please you all, but it is absurd to try. The dish which one man devours, another dislikes. Is the dinner of to-day

[12] The essayist here quotes himself. See his lecture on Swift in *English Humorists*.
[13] where the *Cornhill* was published.
[14] hero of the *Adventures of Philip*, the last installment of which appeared in the same number of the *Cornhill* as "De Finibus."
[15] still I come back.

not to your taste? Let us hope to-morrow's entertainment will be more agreeable. . . . I resume my original subject. What an odd, pleasant, humorous, melancholy feeling it is to sit in the study alone and quiet, now all these people are gone who have been boarding and lodging with me for twenty months! They have interrupted my rest: they have plagued me at all sorts of minutes: they have thrust themselves upon me when I was ill, or wished to be idle, and I have growled out a "Be hanged to you, can't you leave me alone now?" Once or twice they have prevented my going out to dinner. Many and many a time they have prevented my coming home, because I knew they were there waiting in the study, and a plague take them, and I have left home and family, and gone to dine at the Club, and told nobody where I went. They have bored me, those people. They have plagued me at all sorts of uncomfortable hours. They have made such a disturbance in my mind and house, that sometimes I have hardly known what was going on in my family and scarcely have heard what my neighbour said to me. They are gone at last, and you would expect me to be at ease? Far from it. I should almost be glad if Woolcomb[16] would walk in and talk to me; or Twysden[16] reappear, take his place in that chair opposite me, and begin one of his tremendous stories.

Madmen, you know, see visions, hold conversations with, even draw the likeness of, people invisible to you and me. Is this making of people out of fancy madness? and are novel-writers at all entitled to strait-waistcoats? I often forget people's names in life; and in my own stories contritely own that I make dreadful blunders regarding them; but I declare, my dear sir, with respect to the personages introduced into your humble servant's fables, I know the people utterly—I know the sound of their voices. A gentleman came in to see me

[16] characters in his last novel.

the other day, who was so like the picture of Philip Firmin in Mr. Walker's charming drawings in the *Cornhill Magazine* that he was quite a curiosity to me. The same eyes, beard, shoulders, just as you have seen them from month to month. Well, he is not like the Philip Firmin in my mind. Asleep, asleep in the grave, lies the bold, the generous, the reckless, the tender-hearted creature whom I have made to pass through those adventures which have just been brought to an end. It is years since I heard the laughter ringing, or saw the bright blue eyes. When I knew him both were young. I become young as I think of him. And this morning he was alive again in this room, ready to laugh, to fight, to weep. As I write, do you know, it is the grey of evening; the house is quiet; everybody is out; the room is getting a little dark, and I look rather wistfully up from the paper with perhaps ever so little fancy that HE MAY COME IN.——No? No movement. No grey shade, growing more palpable, out of which at last look the well-known eyes. No, the printer came and took him away with the last page of the proofs. And with the printer's boy did the whole cortège of ghosts flit away, invisible! Ha! stay! what is this? Angels and ministers of grace! The door opens, and a dark form—enters, bearing a black—a black suit of clothes. It is John. He says it is time to dress for dinner.

. . . . . .

Every man who has had his German tutor, and has been coached through the famous *Faust* of Goethe (thou wert my instructor, good old Weissenborn, and these eyes beheld the great master himself in dear little Weimar town!) has read those charming verses which are prefixed to the drama, in which the poet reverts to the time when his work was first composed, and recalls the friends now departed, who once listened to his song. The dear shadows rise up around him, he says; he lives in the past again. It is to-day which appears

vague and visionary. We humbler writers cannot create Fausts, or raise up monumental works that shall endure for all ages; but our books are diaries, in which our own feelings must of necessity be set down. As we look to the page written last month, or ten years ago, we remember the day and its events; the child ill, mayhap, in the adjoining room, and the doubts and fears which racked the brain as it still pursued its work; the dear old friend who read the commencement of the tale, and whose gentle hand shall be laid in ours no more. I own for my part that, in reading pages which this hand penned formerly, I often lose sight of the text under my eyes. It is not the words I see; but that past day; that bygone page of life's history; that tragedy, comedy it may be, which our little home-company was enacting; that merry-making which we shared; that funeral which we followed; that bitter, bitter grief which we buried.

And, such being the state of my mind, I pray gentle readers to deal kindly with their humble servant's manifold shortcomings, blunders, and slips of memory. As sure as I read a page of my own composition, I find a fault or two, half-a-dozen. Jones is called Brown. Brown, who is dead, is brought to life. Aghast, and months after the number was printed, I saw that I had called Philip Firmin, Clive Newcome. Now Clive Newcome is the hero of another story by the reader's most obedient writer. The two men are as different in my mind's eye, as—as Lord Palmerston and Mr. Disraeli, let us say. But there is that blunder at page 990, line 76, volume 84 of the *Cornhill Magazine*, and it is past mending; and I wish in my life I had made no worse blunders or errors than that which is hereby acknowledged.

Another Finis written. Another mile-stone passed on this journey from birth to the next world! Sure it is a subject for solemn cogitation. Shall we continue this story-telling business and be voluble to the end of our age! Will it not be presently

time, O prattler, to hold your tongue, and let younger people speak! I have a friend, a painter, who, like other persons who shall be nameless, is growing old. He has never painted with such laborious finish as his works now show. This master is still the most humble and diligent of scholars. Of Art, his mistress, he is always an eager, reverent pupil. In his calling, in yours, in mine, industry and humility will help and comfort us. A word with you. In a pretty large experience I have not found the men who write books superior in wit or learning to those who don't write at all. In regard of mere information, non-writers must often be superior to writers. You don't expect a lawyer in full practice to be conversant with all kinds of literature; he is too busy with his law; and so a writer is commonly too busy with his own books to be able to bestow attention on the works of other people. After a day's work (in which I have been depicting, let us say, the agonies of Louisa on parting with the Captain, or the atrocious behaviour of the wicked Marquis to Lady Emily) I march to the Club, proposing to improve my mind and keep myself "posted up," as the Americans phrase it, in the literature of the day. And what happens? Given a walk after luncheon, a pleasing book, and a most comfortable arm-chair by the fire, and you know the rest. A doze ensues. Pleasing book drops suddenly, is picked up once with an air of some confusion, is laid presently softly in lap: head falls on comfortable arm-chair cushion: eyes close: soft nasal music is heard. Am I telling Club secrets? Of afternoons, after lunch, I say, scores of sensible fogies have a doze. Perhaps I have fallen asleep over that very book to which "Finis" has just been written. "And if the writer sleeps, what happens to the readers?" says Jones, coming down upon me with his lightning wit. What? you *did* sleep over it? And a very good thing too. These eyes have more than once seen a friend dozing over pages which

this hand has written. There is a vignette somewhere in one of my books of a friend so caught napping with *Pendennis*, or *The Newcomes*, in his lap; and if a writer can give you a sweet, soothing, harmless sleep, has he not done you a kindness? So is the author who excites and interests you worthy of your thanks and benedictions. I am troubled with fever and ague, that seize me at odd intervals and prostrate me for a day. There is cold fit, for which, I am thankful to say, hot brandy-and-water is prescribed; and this induces hot fit, and so on. In one or two of these fits I have read novels with the most fearful contentment of mind. Once, on the Mississippi, it was my dearly beloved *Jacob Faithful*[17]: once, at Frankfort O. M., the delightful *Vingt Ans Après*[18] of Monsieur Dumas: once, at Tunbridge Wells, the thrilling *Woman in White*[19]: and these books gave me amusement from morning till sunset. I remember those ague fits with a great deal of pleasure and gratitude. Think of a whole day in bed, and a good novel for a companion! No cares: no remorse about idleness: no visitors: and the Woman in White or the Chevalier d'Artagnan to tell me stories from dawn to night! "Please, ma'am, my master's compliments, and can we have the third volume?" (This message was sent to an astonished friend and neighbour who lent me, volume by volume, the *W. in W.*) How do you like your novels? I like mine strong, "hot with," and no mistake: no love-making: no observations about society: little dialogue, except where the characters are bullying each other: plenty of fighting: and a villain in the cupboard, who is to suffer tortures just before Finis. I don't like your melancholy Finis. I never read the history of a consumptive heroine twice. If I might give a short hint to an impartial writer (as the *Examiner* used

[17] a novel by Captain Marryat, writer of stories of the sea.
[18] *Twenty Years After.*
[19] by Wilkie Collins.

to say in old days), it would be to act, *not* à la mode le pays de Pole [20] (I think that was the phraseology) but *always* to give quarter. In the story of Philip, just come to an end, I have the permission of the author to state that he was going to drown the two villains of the piece—a certain Doctor F—— [21] and a certain Mr. T. H.—— [22] on board the *President*, or some other tragic ship—but you see I relented. I pictured to myself Firmin's ghastly face amid the crowd of shuddering people on that reeling deck in the lonely ocean and thought, "Thou ghastly lying wretch, thou shalt not be drowned; thou shalt have a fever only; a knowledge of thy danger; and a chance—ever so small a chance—of repentance." I wonder whether he *did* repent when he found himself in the yellow-fever, in Virginia? The probability is he fancied that his son had injured him very much, and forgave him on his death-bed. Do you imagine there is a great deal of genuine right-down remorse in the world? Don't people rather find excuses which make their minds easy; endeavour to prove to themselves that they have been lamentably belied and misunderstood; and try and forgive the persecutors who *will* present that bill when it is due; and not bear malice against the cruel ruffian who takes them to the police-office for stealing the spoons? Years ago I had a quarrel with a certain well-known person (I believed a statement regarding him which his friends imparted to me, and which turned out to be quite incorrect). To his dying day that quarrel was never quite made up. I said to his brother, "Why is your brother's soul still dark against me? It is I who ought to be angry and unforgiving: for I was in the wrong." In the region which they now inhabit (for Finis has been set to the volumes of the lives of both here below), if they take any cognisance of our squabbles, and tittle-tattles,

[20] according to Polish custom; i. e., mercilessly.
[21] Doctor Firmin.
[22] Tufton Hunt.

and gossips on earth here, I hope they admit that my little error was not of a nature unpardonable. If you have never committed a worse, my good sir, surely the score against you will not be heavy. Ha, *dilectissimi fratres*[23]! It is in regard of sins *not* found out that we may say or sing (in an undertone in a most penitent and lugubrious minor key), *"Miserere nobis miseris peccatoribus."* [24]

Among the sins of commission which novel-writers not seldom perpetrate, is the sin of grandiloquence, or tall-talking, against which, for my part, I will offer up a special *libera me.*[25] This is the sin of schoolmasters, governesses, critics, sermoners, and instructors of young or old people. Nay (for I am making a clean breast, and liberating my soul), perhaps of all the novel-spinners now extant, the present speaker is the most addicted to preaching. Does he not stop perpetually in his story and begin to preach to you? When he ought to be engaged with business, is he not for ever taking the Muse by the sleeve, and plaguing her with some of his cynical sermons? I cry *peccavi*[26] loudly and heartily. I tell you I would like to be able to write a story which should show no egotism whatever—in which there should be no reflections, no cynicism, no vulgarity (and so forth), but an incident in every other page, a villain, a battle, a mystery in every chapter. I should like to be able to feed a reader so spicily as to leave him hungering and thirsting for more at the end of every monthly meal.

Alexandre Dumas describes himself, when inventing the plan of a work, as lying silent on his back for two whole days on the deck of a yacht in a Mediterranean port. At the end of the two days he arose and called for dinner. In those two days he had built his plot. He had moulded a mighty clay,

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[23] most dearly beloved brethren.
[24] Have pity on us, miserable sinners.
[25] deliver me.
[26] cf. note 2, p. 409.

to be cast presently in perennial brass. The chapters, the characters, the incidents, the combinations were all arranged in the artist's brain ere he set a pen to paper. My Pegasus won't fly, so as to let me survey the field below me. He has no wings, he is blind of one eye certainly; he is restive, stubborn, slow; crops a hedge when he ought to be galloping, or gallops when he ought to be quiet. He never will show off when I want him. Sometimes he goes at a pace which surprises me. Sometimes, when I most wish him to make the running, the brute turns restive, and I am obliged to let him take his own time. I wonder do other novel-writers experience this fatalism? They *must* go a certain way, in spite of themselves. I have been surprised at the observations made by some of my characters. It seems as if an occult Power was moving the pen. The personage does or says something, and I ask, How the dickens did he come to think of that? Every man has remarked in dreams, the vast dramatic power which is sometimes evinced; I won't say the surprising power, for nothing does surprise you in dreams. But those strange characters you meet make instant observations of which you never can have thought previously. In like manner, the imagination foretells things. We spake anon of the inflated style of some writers. What also if there is an *afflated* style,—when a writer is like a Pythoness on her oracle tripod, and mighty words, words which he cannot help, come blowing, and bellowing, and whistling, and moaning through the speaking pipes of his bodily organ? I have told you it was a very queer shock to me the other day when, with a letter of introduction in his hand, the artist's (not my) Philip Firmin walked into this room, and sat down in the chair opposite. In the novel of *Pendennis,* written ten years ago, there is an account of a certain Costigan, whom I had invented (as I suppose authors invent their personages out of scraps, heel-taps, odds and ends of characters). I was smoking in a tavern parlour one night—

and this Costigan came into the room alive—the very man: —the most remarkable resemblance of the printed sketches of the man, of the rude drawings in which I had depicted him. He had the same little coat, the same battered hat, cocked on one eye, the same twinkle in that eye. "Sir," said I, knowing him to be an old friend whom I had met in unknown regions, "sir," I said, "may I offer you a glass of brandy-and-water?" *"Bedad, ye may,"* says he, *"and I'll sing ye a song tu."* Of course he spoke with an Irish brogue. Of course he had been in the army. In ten minutes he pulled out an Army Agent's account, whereon his name was written. A few months after we read of him in a police-court. How had I come to know him, to divine him? Nothing shall convince me that I have not seen that man in the world of spirits. In the world of spirits and water I know I did: but that is a mere quibble of words. I was not surprised when he spoke in an Irish brogue. I had had cognisance of him before somehow. Who has not felt that little shock which arises when a person, a place, some words in a book (there is always a collocation) present themselves to you, and you know that you have before met the same person, words, scene, and so forth?

They used to call the good Sir Walter the "Wizard of the North." What if some writer should appear who can write so *enchantingly* that he shall be able to call into actual life the people whom he invents? What if Mignon, and Margaret, and Goetz von Berlichingen are alive now (though I don't say they are visible), and Dugald Dalgetty and Ivanhoe were to step in at that open window by the little garden yonder? Suppose Uncas and our noble old Leather-stocking were to glide silently in? Suppose Athos, Porthos, and Aramis should enter with a noiseless swagger, curling their moustaches? And dearest Amelia Booth, on Uncle Toby's arm; and Tittlebat Titmouse, with his hair dyed green; and all the Crummles company of comedians, with the Gil Blas troop; and Sir Roger de Coverley;

and the greatest of all crazy gentlemen, the Knight of La Mancha, with his blessed squire? I say to you, I look rather wistfully towards the window, musing upon these people. Were any of them to enter, I think I should not be very much frightened. Dear old friends, what pleasant hours I have had with them! We do not see each other very often, but when we do, we are ever happy to meet. I had a capital half-hour with Jacob Faithful last night; when the last sheet was corrected, when "Finis," had been written, and the printer's boy, with the copy, was safe in Green Arbour Court.

So you are gone, little printer's boy, with the last scratches and corrections on the proof, and a fine flourish by way of Finis at the story's end. The last corrections? I say those last corrections seem never to be finished. A plague upon the weeds! Every day, when I walk in my own little literary garden-plot, I spy some, and should like to have a spud, and root them out. Those idle words, neighbour, are past remedy. That turning back to the old pages produces anything but elation of mind. Would you not pay a pretty fine to be able to cancel some of them? Oh, the sad old pages, the dull old pages! Oh, the cares, the *ennui,* the squabbles, the repetitions, the old conversations over and over again. But now and again a kind thought is recalled, and now and again a dear memory. Yet a few chapters more, and then the last: after which, behold Finis itself come to an end, and the Infinite begun.

Stevenson

Stevenson

(1850-1894)

Robert Louis Stevenson is in our day taking his place, in the opinion both of critics and of the general reader, as the finest English essayist since Lamb. There have been ups-and-downs in the process. At the time of his death he was extravagantly praised, so that it is perhaps natural that there should have been a reaction and that much should have been said in disparagement of his self-conscious manner of writing and of his habit (as his enemies phrased it) of "capitalizing his invalidism." Perhaps, too, as Mr. Chesterton has suggested, Stevenson's very versatility has worked hardship to his reputation as essayist. *Virginibus Puerisque* and *Memories and Portraits* might be more conspicuous were their author not the author also of *Treasure Island, Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* and *A Child's Garden of Verses.*. At any rate, it is clear that the essays, particularly the more personal ones, are now receiving attention. And this is natural in view of the continuing and increasing interest in Stevenson's life and character; the number of recent biographies and memoirs leaves no doubt as to the reality of this interest.

As to Stevenson's feeling for "style," more than one opinion is of course possible. To some, his conscientious apprenticeship and laborious methods of composition, even in his maturity, appear merely as an effort to disguise want of substance, an effort which eventually became a disfiguring mannerism; "He could not dictate a letter," Mr. Swinnerton, a hostile critic, remarks, "but what the phrases ran in accustomed grooves." Others have felt that the ambition to write in the most finished manner is perfectly justified by its success: "There is an indescribable air of distinction," observes Sir Walter Raleigh, "breathing from all his works." We are now far enough removed from Stevenson in time to be quite sure that the "air of distinction" about his writing is a most important element in preserving it against the ravages of time.

The other point, the literary use that Stevenson has made of his life and personality, is also a debatable matter. If he appears to any reader as a hypocrite and a poseur, there is nothing more to be said: for that reader he has failed. But he does not so appear to most readers. They will recall that many an essay was written in the very

shadow of death; and if there are heroics, they are youthful, and pardonable. A little picture that his biographer, Mr. Steuart, gives is worth recalling: Stevenson, crippled with a combination of diseases that left him unable to use his eyes for reading, his throat for talking or dictating, and his right arm for holding the pen—and still scrawling, with his left hand, some of the cheery verses of *A Child's Garden*. It is wholly remarkable that with his entire life a losing battle against disease and ill health, there should be so little hint of invalidism in his work. And if he is a professional optimist, it is at any rate certain that his optimism is not the result of want of experience with sorrow.

On the whole, then, it is by his personality and the way in which that personality is presented that Stevenson, as a familiar essayist, stands or falls. To most readers, the personality is a very attractive one, and it is set forth with the utmost candor. Like Lamb, he has the power to inspire in his readers a genuine affection. Gallantry, boyish enthusiasm, sympathy, and tenderness of heart are perhaps his most appealing traits. With it all, there goes a fondness for preaching that Stevenson himself felt to be inevitable in a Scotchman. It is not merely in such definitely moral themes as those of "Pulvis et Umbra" and "El Dorado" that this tendency shows itself; it is just as conspicuous in the plausible attack upon the orthodox gospel of work—the kind of minority report so dear to the heart of the true essayist—which he called "An Apology for Idlers."

Walking Tours [1]

IT MUST not be imagined that a walking tour, as some would have us fancy, is merely a better or worse way of seeing the country. There are many ways of seeing landscape quite as good; and none more vivid, in spite of canting dilettantes, than from a railway train. But landscape on a walking tour is quite accessory. He who is indeed of the brotherhood does not voyage in quest of the picturesque, but of certain jolly humours—of the hope and spirit with which the march begins at morning, and the peace and spiritual repletion of the evening's rest. He cannot tell whether he puts his knapsack on,

[1] reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

or takes it off, with more delight. The excitement of the departure puts him in key for that of the arrival. Whatever he does is not only a reward in itself, but will be further rewarded in the sequel; and so pleasure leads on to pleasure in an endless chain. It is this that so few can understand; they will either be always lounging or always at five miles an hour; they do not play off the one against the other, prepare all day for the evening, and all evening for the next day. And, above all, it is here that your overwalker fails of comprehension. His heart rises against those who drink their curaçoa in liqueur glasses, when he himself can swill it in a brown john. He will not believe that the flavour is more delicate in the smaller dose. He will not believe that to walk this unconscionable distance is merely to stupefy and brutalise himself, and come to his inn, at night, with a sort of frost on his five wits, and a starless night of darkness in his spirit. Not for him the mild luminous evening of the temperate walker! He has nothing left of man but a physical need for bedtime and a double night-cap; and even his pipe, if he be a smoker, will be savourless and disenchanted. It is the fate of such an one to take twice as much trouble as is needed to obtain happiness, and miss the happiness in the end; he is the man of the proverb, in short, who goes further and fares worse.

Now, to be properly enjoyed, a walking tour should be gone upon alone. If you go in a company, or even in pairs, it is no longer a walking tour in anything but name; it is something else and more in the nature of a picnic. A walking tour should be gone upon alone, because freedom is of the essence; because you should be able to stop and go on, and follow this way or that, as the freak takes you; and because you must have your own pace, and neither trot alongside a champion walker, nor mince in time with a girl. And then you must be open to all impressions and let your thoughts take colour from what you see. You should be as a pipe for any wind to play upon. "I cannot see

the wit," says Hazlitt,[2] "of walking and talking at the same time. When I am in the country, I wish to vegetate like the country,"—which is the gist of all that can be said upon the matter. There should be no cackle of voices at your elbow, to jar on the meditative silence of the morning. And so long as a man is reasoning he cannot surrender himself to that fine intoxication that comes of much motion in the open air, that begins in a sort of dazzle and sluggishness of the brain, and ends in a peace that passes comprehension.

During the first day or so of any tour there are moments of bitterness, when the traveller feels more than coldly towards his knapsack, when he is half in a mind to throw it bodily over the hedge and, like Christian on a similar occasion,[3] "give three leaps and go on singing." And yet it soon acquires a property of easiness. It becomes magnetic; the spirit of the journey enters into it. And no sooner have you passed the straps over your shoulder than the lees of sleep are cleared from you, you pull yourself together with a shake, and fall at once into your stride. And surely, of all possible moods, this, in which a man takes the road, is the best. Of course, if he *will* keep thinking of his anxieties, if he *will* open the merchant Abudah's[4] chest and walk arm in arm with the hag—why, wherever he is, and whether he walk fast or slow, the chances are that he will not be happy. And so much the more shame to himself! There are perhaps thirty men setting forth at that same hour, and I would lay a large wager there is not another dull face among the thirty. It would be a fine thing to follow, in a coat of darkness, one after another of these wayfarers, some summer morning, for the first few miles upon the road. This one, who walks fast, with a keen look in his eyes, is all concentrated in his own mind; he is up at his loom,

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[2] whose "On Going a Journey" (see pp. 266–279) Stevenson quotes here and elsewhere in this essay.
[3] in *Pilgrim's Progress*.
[4] a character in James Ridley's *Tales of the Genii*.

weaving and weaving, to set the landscape to words. This one peers about, as he goes, among the grasses; he waits by the canal to watch the dragon-flies; he leans on the gate of the pasture, and cannot look enough upon the complacent kine. And here comes another, talking, laughing, and gesticulating to himself. His face changes from time to time. as indignation flashes from his eyes or anger clouds his forehead. He is composing articles, delivering orations, and conducting the most impassioned interviews, by the way. A little farther on, and it is as like as not he will begin to sing. And well for him, supposing him to be no great master in that art, if he stumble across no stolid peasant at a corner; for on such an occasion, I scarcely know which is the more troubled, or whether it is worse to suffer the confusion of your troubadour, or the unfeigned alarm of your clown. A sedentary population, accustomed, besides, to the strange mechanical bearing of the common tramp, can in no wise explain to itself the gaiety of these passers-by. I knew one man who was arrested as a runaway lunatic, because, although a full-grown person with a red beard, he skipped as he went like a child. And you would be astonished if I were to tell you all the grave and learned heads who have confessed to me that, when on walking tours, they sang—and sang very ill—and had a pair of red ears when, as described above, the inauspicious peasant plumped into their arms from round a corner. And here, lest you should think I am exaggerating, is Hazlitt's own confession, from his essay *On Going a Journey*, which is so good that there should be a tax levied on all who have not read it:

"Give me the clear blue sky over my head," says he, "and the green turf beneath my feet, a winding road before me, and a three hours' march to dinner—and then to thinking! It is hard if I cannot start some game on these lone heaths. I laugh, I run, I leap, I sing for joy."

Bravo! After that adventure of my friend with the policeman, you would not have cared, would you, to publish that in the first

person? But we have no bravery nowadays, and, even in books, must all pretend to be as dull and foolish as our neighbours. It was not so with Hazlitt. And notice how learned he is (as, indeed, throughout the essay) in the theory of walking tours. He is none of your athletic men in purple stockings, who walk their fifty miles a day: three hours' march is his ideal. And then he must have a winding road, the epicure!

Yet there in one thing I object to in these words of his, one thing in the great master's practice that seems to me not wholly wise. I do not approve of that leaping and running. Both of these hurry the respiration; they both shake up the brain out of its glorious open-air confusion; and they both break the pace. Uneven walking is not so agreeable to the body, and it distracts and irritates the mind. Whereas, when once you have fallen into an equable stride, it requires no conscious thought from you to keep it up, and yet it prevents you from thinking earnestly of anything else. Like knitting, like the work of a copying clerk, it gradually neutralises and sets to sleep the serious activity of the mind. We can think of this or that, lightly and laughingly, as a child thinks, or as we think in a morning doze; we can make puns or puzzle out acrostics, and trifle in a thousand ways with words and rhymes; but when it comes to honest work, when we come to gather ourselves together for an effort, we may sound the trumpet as loud and long as we please; the great barons of the mind will not rally to the standard, but sit, each one, at home, warming his hands over his own fire and brooding on his own private thought!

In the course of a day's walk, you see, there is much variance in the mood. From the exhilaration of the start, to the happy phlegm of the arrival, the change is certainly great. As the day goes on, the traveller moves from the one extreme towards the other. He becomes more and more incorporated with the material landscape, and the open-air drunkenness grows upon him with great strides, until he posts along the road, and sees everything

about him, as in a cheerful dream. The first is certainly brighter, but the second stage is the more peaceful. A man does not make so many articles towards the end, nor does he laugh aloud; but the purely animal pleasures, the sense of physical wellbeing, the delight of every inhalation, of every time the muscles tighten down the thigh, console him for the absence of the others, and bring him to his destination still content.

Nor must I forget to say a word on bivouacs. You come to a milestone on a hill, or some place where deep ways meet under trees; and off goes the knapsack, and down you sit to smoke a pipe in the shade. You sink into yourself, and the birds come round and look at you; and your smoke dissipates upon the afternoon under the blue dome of heaven; and the sun lies warm upon your feet, and the cool air visits your neck and turns aside your open shirt. If you are not happy, you must have an evil conscience. You may dally as long as you like by the roadside. It is almost as if the millennium were arrived, when we shall throw our clocks and watches over the house-top, and remember time and seasons no more. Not to keep hours for a lifetime is, I was going to say, to live for ever. You have no idea, unless you have tried it, how endlessly long is a summer's day, that you measure out only by hunger, and bring to an end only when you are drowsy. I know a village where there are hardly any clocks, where no one knows more of the days of the week than by a sort of instinct for the *fête* on Sundays, and where only one person can tell you the day of the month, and she is generally wrong; and if people were aware how slow Time journeyed in that village, and what armfuls of spare hours he gives, over and above the bargain, to its wise inhabitants, I believe there would be a stampede out of London, Liverpool, Paris, and a variety of large towns, where the clocks lose their heads, and shake the hours out each one faster than the other, as though they were all in a wager. And all these foolish pilgrims would each bring his own misery along with him, in a watch-

pocket! It is to be noticed, there were no clocks and watches in the much-vaunted days before the flood. It follows, of course, there were no appointments, and punctuality was not yet thought upon. "Though ye take from a covetous man all his treasure," says Milton,[5] "he has yet one jewel left; ye cannot deprive him of his covetousness." And so I would say of a modern man of business, you may do what you will for him, put him in Eden, give him the elixir of life—he has still a flaw at heart, he still has his business habits. Now, there is no time when business habits are more mitigated than on a walking tour. And so during these halts, as I say, you will feel almost free.

But it is at night, and after dinner, that the best hour comes. There are no such pipes to be smoked as those that follow a good day's march; the flavour of the tobacco is a thing to be remembered, it is so dry and aromatic, so full and so fine. If you wind up the evening with grog, you will own there was never such grog; at every sip a jocund tranquillity spreads about your limbs, and sits easily in your heart. If you read a book—and you will never do so save by fits and starts—you find the language strangely racy and harmonious; words take a new meaning; single sentences possess the ear for half an hour together; and the writer endears himself to you, at every page, by the nicest coincidence of sentiment. It seems as if it were a book you had written yourself in a dream. To all we have read on such occasions we look back with special favour. "It was on the 10th of April, 1798," says Hazlitt, with amorous precision, "that I sat down to a volume of the new *Héloïse,* at the Inn at Llangollen, over a bottle of sherry and a cold chicken." I should wish to quote more, for though we are mighty fine fellows nowadays, we cannot write like Hazlitt. And, talking of that, a volume of Hazlitt's essays would be a capital pocket-book on such a jour-

[5] in *Areopagitica.* (cf. p. 93.)

ney; so would a volume of Heine's songs; and for *Tristram Shandy*[6] I can pledge a fair experience.

If the evening be fine and warm, there is nothing better in life than to lounge before the inn door in the sunset, or lean over the parapet of the bridge, to watch the weeds and the quick fishes. It is then, if ever, that you taste joviality to the full significance[7] of that audacious word. Your muscles are so agreeably slack, you feel so clean and so strong and so idle, that whether you move or sit still, whatever you do is done with pride and kingly sort of pleasure. You fall in talk with any one, wise or foolish, drunk or sober. And it seems as if a hot walk purged you, more than of anything else, of all narrowness and pride, and left curiosity to play its part freely, as in a child or a man of science. You lay aside all your own hobbies, to watch provincial humours develop themselves before you, now as a laughable farce, and now grave and beautiful like an old tale.

Or perhaps you are left to your own company for the night, and surly weather imprisons you by the fire. You may remember how Burns, numbering past pleasures, dwells upon the hours when he has been "happy thinking." It is a phrase that may well perplex a poor modern, girt about on every side by clocks and chimes, and haunted, even at night, by flaming dial-plates. For we are all so busy, and have so many far-off projects to realise, and castles in the fire to turn into solid, habitable mansions on a gravel soil, that we can find no time for pleasure trips into the Land of Thought and among the Hills of Vanity. Changed times, indeed, when we must sit all night, beside the fire, with folded hands; and a changed world for most of us, when we find we can pass the hours without dis-

[6] cf. note 8, p. 272.
[7] alluding to its connection with Jove, the greatest of the gods.

content, and be happy thinking. We are in such haste to be doing, to be writing, to be gathering gear, to make our voice audible a moment in the derisive silence of eternity, that we forget that one thing, of which these are but the parts—namely to live. We fall in love, we drink hard, we run to and fro upon the earth like frightened sheep. And now you are to ask yourself if, when all is done, you would not have been better to sit by the fire at home, and be happy thinking. To sit still and contemplate,—to remember the faces of women without desire, to be pleased by the great deeds of men without envy, to be everywhere in sympathy, and yet content to remain where and what you are—is not this to know both wisdom and virtue, and to dwell with happiness? After all, it is not they who carry flags, but they who look upon it from a private chamber, who have the fun of the procession. And once you are at that, you are in the very humour of all social heresy. It is no time for shuffling, or for big, empty words. If you ask yourself what you mean by fame, riches, or learning, the answer is far to seek; and you go back into that kingdom of light imaginations, which seem so vain in the eyes of Philistines[8] perspiring after wealth, and so momentous to those who are stricken with the disproportions of the world, and, in the face of the gigantic stars, cannot stop to split differences between two degrees of the infinitesimally small, such as a tobacco pipe or the Roman Empire, a million of money or a fiddlestick's end.

You lean from the window, your last pipe reeking whitely into the darkness, your body full of delicious pains, your mind enthroned in the seventh circle of content; when suddenly the mood changes, the weather-cock goes about, and you ask yourself one question more: whether, for the interval, you have been the wisest philosopher or the most egregious of donkeys? Human experience is not yet able to reply; but at least you

[8] in Matthew Arnold's sense of "materialists."

have had a fine moment, and looked down upon all the kingdoms of the earth. And whether it was wise or foolish, to-morrow's travel will carry you, body and mind, into some different parish of the infinite.

An Apology for Idlers[9]

JUST now, when every one is bound, under pain of a decree in absence convicting them of *lèse*-respectability, to enter on some lucrative profession, and labour therein with something not far short of enthusiasm, a cry from the opposite party who are content when they have enough, and like to look on and enjoy in the meanwhile, savours a little of bravado and gasconade. And yet this should not be. Idleness, so called, which does not consist in doing nothing, but in doing a great deal not recognized in the dogmatic formularies of the ruling class, has as good a right to state its position as industry itself. It is admitted that the presence of people who refuse to enter in the great handicap race for sixpenny pieces, is at once an insult and a disenchantment for those who do. A fine fellow (as we see so many) takes his determination, votes for the sixpences, and in the emphatic Americanism, "goes for" them. And while such an one is ploughing distressfully up the road, it is not hard to understand his resentment, when he perceives cool persons in the meadows by the wayside, lying with a handkerchief over their ears and a glass at their elbow. Alexander is touched in a very delicate place by the disregard of Diogenes. Where was the glory of having taken Rome for these tumultuous barbarians who poured into the Senate-house and found the Fathers sitting silent and unmoved by their success? It is a sore thing to have laboured along and scaled the arduous hilltops, and when

[9] reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

all is done, find humanity indifferent to your achievement. Hence physicists condemn the unphysical; financiers have only a superficial toleration for those who know little of stocks; literary persons despise the unlettered; and people of all pursuits combine to disparage those who have none.

But though this is one difficulty of the subject, it is not the greatest. You could not be put in prison for speaking against industry, but you can be sent to Coventry for speaking like a fool. The greatest difficulty with most subjects is to do them well; therefore, please to remember this is an apology. It is certain that much may be judiciously argued in favor of diligence; only there is something to be said against it, and that is what, on the present occasion, I have to say. To state one argument is not necessarily to be deaf to all others, and that a man has written a book of travels on Montenegro is no reason why he should never have been to Richmond.

It is surely beyond a doubt that people should be a good deal idle in youth. For though here and there a Lord Macaulay may escape from school honours with all his wits about him, most boys pay so dear for their medals that they never afterwards have a shot in their locker, and begin the world bankrupt. And the same holds true during all the time a lad is educating himself, or suffers others to educate him. It must have been a very foolish old gentleman who addressed Johnson at Oxford in these words: "Young man, ply your book diligently now, and acquire a stock of knowledge; for when years come upon you, you will find that poring upon books will be but an irksome task." The old gentleman seems to have been unaware that many other things beside reading grow irksome, and not a few become impossible, by the time a man has to use spectacles and cannot walk without a stick. Books are good enough in their own way, but they are a mighty bloodless substitute for life. It seems a pity to sit, like the Lady of Shalott, peering into a mirror, with your back turned on all the bustle and glamour

of reality. And if a man reads very hard, as the old anecdote reminds us, he will have little time for thought.

If you look back on your own education, I am sure it will not be the full, vivid, instructive hours of truantry that you regret; you would rather cancel some lack-lustre periods between sleep and waking in the class. For my own part, I have attended a good many lectures in my time. I still remember that the spinning of a top is a case of Kinetic Stability. I still remember that Emphyteusis[10] is not a disease, nor Stillicide[10] a crime. But though I would not willingly part with such scraps of science, I do not set the same store by them as by certain other odds and ends that I came by in the open street while I was playing truant. This is not the moment to dilate on that mighty place of education which was the favourite school of Dickens and of Balzac, and turns out yearly many inglorious masters in the Science of the Aspects of Life. Suffice it to say this: if a lad does not learn in the streets, it is because he has no faculty of learning. Nor is the truant always in the streets; for if he prefers, he may go out by the gardened suburbs into the country. He may pitch on some tuft of lilacs over a burn, and smoke innumerable pipes to the tune of the water on the stones. A bird will sing in the thicket. And there he may fall into a vein of kindly thought, and see things in a new perspective. Why, if this be not education, what is? We may conceive Mr. Worldly Wiseman accosting such an one, and the conversation that should thereupon ensue:—

"How now, young fellow, what dost thou here?"

"Truly, sir, I take mine ease."

"Is not this the hour of the class? and should'st thou not be plying thy Book with diligence, to the end thou mayest obtain knowledge?"

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[10] terms of Roman law: the first means the legal renting of ground, the second a continual dropping of water.

"Nay, but thus also I follow after Learning, by your leave."

"Learning, quotha! After what fashion, I pray thee? Is it mathematics?"

"No, to be sure."

"Is it metaphysics?"

"Nor that."

"Is it some language?"

"Nay, it is no language."

"Is it a trade?"

"Nor a trade, neither."

"Why, then, what is't?"

"Indeed, sir, as a time may soon come for me to go upon Pilgrimage, I am desirous to note what is commonly done by persons in my case, and where are the ugliest Sloughs and Thickets on the Road; as also, what manner of Staff is of the best service. Moreover, I lie here, by this water, to learn by root-of-heart a lesson which my master teaches me to call Peace, or Contentment."

Hereupon Mr. Worldly Wiseman was much commoved with passion, and shaking his cane with a very threatful countenance, broke forth upon this wise: "Learning, quotha!" said he; "I would have all such rogues scourged by the Hangman!"

And so he would go his way, ruffling out his cravat with a crackle of starch, like a turkey when it spreads its feathers.

Now this, of Mr. Wiseman's, is the common opinion. A fact is not called a fact, but a piece of gossip, if it does not fall into one of your scholastic categories. An inquiry must be in some acknowledged direction, with a name to go by, or else you are not inquiring at all, only lounging; and the workhouse is too good for you. It is supposed that all knowledge is at the bottom of a well, or the far end of a telescope.

Sainte-Beuve, as he grew older, came to regard all experience as a single great book, in which to study for a few years ere we go hence; and it seemed all one to him whether you should

read in Chapter xx, which is the differential calculus, or in Chapter xxxix, which is hearing the band play in the gardens. As a matter of fact, an intelligent person, looking out of his eyes and hearkening in his ears, with a smile on his face all the time, will get more true education than many another in a life of heroic vigils. There is certainly some chill and arid knowledge to be found upon the summits of formal and laborious science; but it is all round about you, and for the trouble of looking, that you will acquire the warm and palpitating facts of life. While others are filling their memory with a lumber of words, one-half of which they will forget before the week be out, your truant may learn some really useful art: to play the fiddle, to know a good cigar, or to speak with ease and opportunity to all varieties of men. Many who have "plied their book diligently," and know all about some one branch or another of accepted lore, come out of the study with an ancient and owl-like demeanour, and prove dry, stockish, and dyspeptic in all the better and brighter parts of life. Many make a large fortune, who remain underbred and pathetically stupid to the last. And meantime there goes the idler, who began life along with them—by your leave, a different picture. He has had time to take care of his health and his spirits; he has been a great deal in the open air, which is the most salutary of all things for both body and mind; and if he has never read the great Book in very recondite places, he has dipped into it and skimmed it over to excellent purpose. Might not the student afford some Hebrew roots, and the business man some of his half-crowns, for a share of the idler's knowledge of life at large, and Art of Living? Nay, and the idler has another and more important quality than these. I mean his wisdom. He who has much looked on at the childish satisfaction of other people in their hobbies, will regard his own with only a very ironical indulgence. He will not be heard among the dogmatists. He will have a great and cool allowance for all sorts of people and opinions. If

he finds no out-of-the-way truths, he will identify himself with no very burning falsehood. His way takes him along a by-road, not much frequented, but very even and pleasant, which is called Commonplace Lane, and leads to the Belvedere of Common Sense. Thence he shall command an agreeable, if no very noble prospect; and while others behold the East and West, the Devil and the Sunrise, he will be contentedly aware of a sort of morning hour upon all sublunary things, with an army of shadows running speedily and in many different directions into the great daylight of Eternity. The shadows and the generations, the shrill doctors and the plangent wars, go by into ultimate silence and emptiness; but underneath all this, a man may see, out of the Belvedere windows, much green and peaceful landscape; many firelit parlors; good people laughing, drinking, and making love as they did before the Flood or the French Revolution; and the old shepherd telling his tale under the hawthorn.

Extreme *business,* whether at school or college, kirk or market, is a symptom of deficient vitality; and faculty for idleness implies a catholic appetite and a strong sense of personal identity. There is a sort of dead-alive, hackneyed people about, who are scarcely conscious of living except in the exercise of some conventional occupation. Bring these fellows into the country, or set them aboard ship, and you will see how they pine for their desk or their study. They have no curiosity; they cannot give themselves over to random provocations; they do not take pleasure in the exercise of their faculties for its own sake; and unless Necessity lays about them with a stick, they will even stand still. It is no good speaking to such folk: they *cannot* be idle, their nature is not generous enough; and they pass those hours in a sort of coma, which are not dedicated to furious moiling in the gold-mill. When they do not require to go to the office, when they are not hungry, and have no mind to drink, the whole breathing world is a blank to them. If they have to wait an hour or so for a train, they fall into a stupid trance with their

eyes open. To see them, you would suppose there was nothing to look at and no one to speak with; you would imagine they were paralyzed or alienated; and yet very possibly they are hard workers in their own way, and have good eyesight for a flaw in a deed or a turn of the market. They have been to school and college, but all the time they had their eye on the medal; they have gone about in the world and mixed with clever people, but all the time they were thinking of their own affairs. As if a man's soul were not too small to begin with, they have dwarfed and narrowed theirs by a life of all work and no play; until here they are at forty, with a listless attention, a mind vacant of all material of amusement, and not one thought to rub against another, while they wait for the train. Before he was breeched he might have clambered on the boxes; when he was twenty, he would have stared at the girls; but now the pipe is smoked out, the snuff-box empty, and my gentleman sits bolt upright upon a bench, with lamentable eyes. This does not appeal to me as being Success in Life.

But it is not only the person himself who suffers from his busy habits, but his wife and children, his friends and relations, and down to the very people he sits with in a railway carriage or an omnibus. Perpetual devotion to what a man calls his business is only to be sustained by perpetual neglect of many other things. And it is not by any means certain that a man's business is the most important thing he has to do. To an impartial estimate it will seem clear that many of the wisest, most virtuous, and most beneficent parts that are to be played upon the Theatre of Life are filled by gratuitous performers, and pass, among the world at large, as phases of idleness. For in that Theatre, not only the walking gentlemen, singing chambermaids, and diligent fiddlers in the orchestra, but those who look on and clap their hands from the benches, do really play a part and fulfill important offices towards the general result. You are no doubt very dependent on the care of your lawyer

and stockbroker, of the guards and signalmen who convey you rapidly from place to place, and the policemen who walk the streets for your protection; but is there not a thought of gratitude in your heart for certain other benefactors who set you smiling when they fall in your way, or season your dinner with good company? Colonel Newcome helped to lose his friend's money; Fred Bayham had an ugly trick of borrowing shirts; and yet they were better peope to fall among than Mr. Barnes.[11] And though Falstaff was neither sober nor very honest, I think I could name one or two long-faced Barabbases[12] whom the world could better have done without. Hazlitt mentions that he was more sensible of obligation to Northcote,[13] who had never done him anything he could call a service, than to his whole circle of ostentatious friends; for he thought a good companion emphatically the greatest benefactor. I know there are people in the world who cannot feel grateful unless the favour has been done them at the cost of pain and difficulty. But this is a churlish disposition. A man may send you six sheets of letter-paper covered with the most entertaining gossip, or you may pass half an hour pleasantly, perhaps profitably, over an article of his. Do you think the service would be greater, if he had made the manuscript in his heart's blood, like a compact with the devil? Do you really fancy you should be more beholden to your correspondent, if he had been damning you all the while for your importunity? Pleasures are more beneficial than duties, because, like the quality of mercy, they are not strained, and they are twice blest. There must always be two to a kiss, and there may be a score in a jest; but wherever there is an element of sacrifice, the favour is conferred with pain, and, among generous people, received with confusion. There is no duty we

[11] characters in Thackeray's *Newcomes*.
[12] suggested by the name of the robber Barabbas, whom Pilate set free, rather than Christ, at the insistence of the Jews.
[13] a painter whose talk Hazlitt recorded in his last published volume, *The Conversations of James Northcote*.

so much underrate as the duty of being happy. By being happy, we sow anonymous benefits upon the world, which remain unknown even to ourselves, or, when they are disclosed, surprise nobody so much as the benefactor. The other day, a ragged, barefoot boy ran down the street after a marble, with so jolly an air that he set every one he passed into a good humour; one of these persons, who had been delivered from more than usually black thoughts, stopped the little fellow and gave him some money with this remark: "You see what sometimes comes of looking pleased." If he had looked pleased before, he had now to look both pleased and mystified. For my part, I justify this encouragement of smiling rather than tearful children; I do not want to pay for tears anywhere but upon the stage; but I am prepared to deal largely in the opposite commodity. A happy man or woman is a better thing to find than a five-pound note. He or she is a radiating focus of good-will; and their entrance into a room is as though another candle had been lighted. We need not care whether they could prove the forty-seventh proposition; they do a better thing than that, they practically demonstrate the great Theorem of the Liveableness of Life. Consequently, if a person cannot be happy without remaining idle, idle he should remain. It is a revolutionary precept; but, thanks to hunger and the workhouse, one not easily to be abused; and, within practical limits, it is one of the most incontestable truths in the whole Body of Morality. Look at one of your industrious fellows for a moment, I beseech you. He sows hurry and reaps indigestion; he puts a vast deal of activity out to interest, and receives a large measure of nervous derangement in return. Either he absents himself entirely from all fellowship, and lives a recluse in a garret, with carpet slippers and a leaden inkpot; or he comes among people swiftly and bitterly, in a contraction of his whole nervous system, to discharge some temper before he returns to work. I do not care how much or how well he works, this fellow is an evil feature in other people's

lives. They would be happier if he were dead. They would easier do without his services in the Circumlocution Office,[14] than they can tolerate his fractious spirits. He poisons life at the well-head. It is better to be beggared out of hand by a scapegrace nephew, than daily hag-ridden by a peevish uncle.

And what, in God's name, is all this pother about? For what cause do they embitter their own and other people's lives? That a man should publish three or thirty articles a year, that he should finish or not finish his great allegorical picture, are questions of little interest to the world. The ranks of life are full; and although a thousand fall, there are always some to go into the breach. When they told Joan of Arc she should be at home minding women's work, she answered there were plenty to spin and wash. And so, even with your own rare gifts! When nature is "so careless of the single life," why should we coddle ourselves into the fancy that our own is of exceptional importance? Suppose Shakespeare[15] had been knocked on the head some dark night in Sir Thomas Lucy's preserves, the world would have wagged no better or worse, the pitcher gone to the well, the scythe to the corn, and the student to his book; and no one been any the wiser of the loss. There are not many works extant, if you look the alternative all over, which are worth the price of a pound of tobacco to a man of limited means. This is a sobering reflection for the proudest of our earthly vanities. Even a tobacconist may, upon consideration, find no great cause for personal vainglory in the phrase; for although tobacco is an admirable sedative, the qualities necessary for retailing it are neither rare nor precious in themselves. Alas and alas! you may take it how you will, but the services of no single individual are indispensable. Atlas[16] was just a gentleman with a protracted nightmare! And yet you see merchants who

[14] See Dickens' *Little Dorrit*.
[15] a reference to the legend of Shakespeare's deer-stealing exploit.
[16] who, according to the myth, held the world in place.

go and labour themselves into a great fortune and thence into the bankruptcy court; scribblers who keep scribbling at little articles until their temper is a cross to all who come about them, as though Pharaoh should set the Israelites to make a pin instead of a pyramid; and fine young men who work themselves into a decline, and are driven off in a hearse with white plumes upon it. Would you not suppose these persons had been whispered, by the Master of the Ceremonies, the promise of some momentous destiny? and that this lukewarm bullet on which they play their farces was the bull's-eye and centre-point of all the universe? And yet it is not so. The ends for which they give away their priceless youth, for all they know, may be chimerical or hurtful; the glory and riches they expect may never come, or may find them indifferent; and they and the world they inhabit are so inconsiderable that the mind freezes at the thought.

El Dorado [17]

IT seems as if a great deal were attainable in a world where there are so many marriages and decisive battles, and where we all, at certain hours of the day, and with great gusto and despatch, stow a portion of victuals finally and irretrievably into the bag which contains us. And it would seem also, on a hasty view, that the attainment of as much as possible was the one goal of man's contentious life. And yet, as regards the spirit, this is but a semblance. We live in an ascending scale when we live happily, one thing leading to another in an endless series. There is always a new horizon for onward-looking men, and although we dwell on a small planet, immersed in petty business and not enduring beyond a brief period of years, we are so constituted that our hopes are inaccessible, like stars, and the term

[17] reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

of hoping is prolonged until the term of life. To be truly happy is a question of how we begin and not of how we end, of what we want and not of what we have. An aspiration is a joy for ever, a possession as solid as a landed estate, a fortune which we can never exhaust and which gives us year by year a revenue of pleasurable activity. To have many of these is to be spiritually rich. Life is only a very dull and ill-directed theatre unless we have some interests in the piece; and to those who have neither art nor science, the world is a mere arrangement of colours, or a rough footway where they may very well break their shins. It is in virtue of his own desires and curiosities that any man continues to exist with even patience, that he is charmed by the look of things and people, and that he wakens every morning with a renewed appetite for work and pleasure. Desire and curiosity are the two eyes through which he sees the world in the most enchanted colours: it is they that make women beautiful or fossils interesting: and the man may squander his estate and come to beggary, but if he keeps these two amulets he is still rich in the possibilities of pleasure. Suppose he could take one meal so compact and comprehensive that he should never hunger any more; suppose him, at a glance, to take in all the features of the world and allay the desire for knowledge; suppose him to do the like in any province of experience—would not that man be in a poor way for amusement ever after?

One who goes touring on foot with a single volume in his knapsack reads with circumspection, pausing often to reflect, and often laying the book down to contemplate the landscape or the prints in the inn parlour; for he fears to come to an end of his entertainment, and be left companionless on the last stages of his journey. A young fellow recently finished the works of Thomas Carlyle, winding up, if we remember aright, with the ten note-books upon Frederick the Great. "What!" cried the young fellow, in consternation, "is there no more Carlyle? Am I left to the daily papers?" A more celebrated instance is that of

Alexander, who wept bitterly because he had no more worlds to subdue. And when Gibbon had finished the *Decline and Fall*, he had only a few moments of joy; and it was with a "sober melancholy" that he parted from his labours.

Happily we all shoot at the moon with ineffectual arrows; our hopes are set on inaccessible El Dorado; we come to an end of nothing here below. Interests are only plucked up to sow themselves again, like mustard. You would think, when the child was born, there would be an end to trouble; and yet it is only the beginning of fresh anxieties; and when you have seen it through its teething and its education, and at last its marriage, alas! it is only to have new fears, new quivering sensibilities, with every day; and the health of your children's children grows as touching a concern as that of your own. Again, when you have married your wife, you would think you were got upon a hilltop, and might begin to go downward by an easy slope. But you have only ended courting to begin marriage. Falling in love and winning love are often difficult tasks to overbearing and rebellious spirits; but to keep in love is also a business of some importance, to which both man and wife must bring kindness and goodwill. The true love story commences at the altar, when there lies before the married pair a most beautiful contest of wisdom and generosity, and a life-long struggle towards an unattainable ideal. Unattainable? Ay, surely unattainable, from the very fact that they are two instead of one.

"Of making books there is no end," complained the Preacher; and did not perceive how highly he was praising letters as an occupation. There is no end, indeed, to making books or experiments, or to travel, or to gathering wealth. Problem gives rise to problem. We may study for ever, and we are never as learned as we would be. We have never made a statue worthy of our dreams. And when we have discovered a continent, or crossed a chain of mountains, it is only to find another ocean or plain upon the further side. In the infinite universe there is

room for our swiftest diligence and to spare. It is not like the works of Carlyle, which can be read to an end. Even in a corner of it, in a private park, or in the neighbourhood of a single hamlet, the weather and the seasons keep so deftly changing that although we walk there for a lifetime there will be always something new to startle and delight us.

There is only one wish realisable on the earth; only one thing that can be perfectly attained: Death. And from a variety of circumstances we have no one to tell us whether it be worth attaining.

A strange picture we make on our way to our chimæras, ceaselessly marching, grudging ourselves the time for rest; indefatigable, adventurous pioneers. It is true that we shall never reach the goal; it is even more than probable that there is no such place; and if we lived for centuries and were endowed with the powers of a god, we should find ourselves not much nearer what we wanted at the end. O toiling hands of mortals! O unwearied feet, travelling ye know not whither! Soon, soon, it seems to you, you must come forth on some conspicuous hilltop, and but a little way further, against the setting sun, descry the spires of El Dorado. Little do ye know your own blessedness; for to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labour.

Pulvis et Umbra[18]

WE look for some reward of our endeavours and are disappointed; not success, not happiness, not even peace of conscience, crowns our ineffectual efforts to do well. Our frailties are invincible, our virtues barren; the battle goes sore against us to the going down of the sun. The canting moralist tells

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[18] reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons. The title is a phrase from Horace (literally, "dust and a shade") which signifies the "necessary end" of humanity.

us of right and wrong; and we look abroad, even on the face of our small earth, and find them change with every climate, and no country where some action is not honoured for a virtue and none where it is not branded for a vice; and we look in our experience, and find no vital congruity in the wisest rules, but at the best a municipal fitness. It is not strange if we are tempted to despair of good. We ask too much. Our religions and moralities have been trimmed to flatter us, till they are all emasculate and sentimentalized, and only please and weaken. Truth is of a rougher strain. In the harsh face of life, faith can read a bracing gospel. The human race is a thing more ancient than the Ten Commandments; and the bones and revolutions of the Kosmos, in whose joints we are but moss and fungus, more ancient still.

I

Of the Kosmos in the last resort, science reports many doubtful things and all of them appalling. There seems no substance to this solid globe on which we stamp: nothing but symbols and ratios. Symbols and ratios carry us and bring us forth and beat us down; gravity that swings the incommensurable suns and worlds through space, is but a figment varying inversely as the squares of distances; and the suns and worlds themselves, imponderable figures of abstraction, NH_3 and H_2O. Consideration dares not dwell upon this view; that way madness lies; science carries us into zones of speculation where there is no habitable city for the mind of man.

But take the Kosmos with a grosser faith, as our senses give it us. We behold space sown with rotatory islands, suns and worlds and the shards and wrecks of systems: some, like the sun, still blazing; some rotting, like the earth; others, like the moon, stable in desolation. All of these we take to be made of something we call matter: a thing which no analysis can help

us to conceive, to whose incredible properties, no familiarities can reconcile our minds. This stuff, when not purified by the lustration of fire, rots uncleanly into something we call life; seized through all its atoms with a pediculous malady; swelling in tumours that become independent, sometimes even (by an abhorrent prodigy) locomotory; one splitting into millions, millions cohering into one, as the malady proceeds through varying stages. This vital putrescence of the dust, used as we are to it, yet strikes us with occasional disgust, and the profusion of worms in a piece of ancient turf, or the air of a marsh darkened with insects, will sometimes check our breathing so that we aspire for cleaner places. But none is clean: the moving sand is infected with lice; the pure spring, where it bursts out of the mountain, is a mere issue of worms; even in the hard rock the crystal is forming.

In two main shapes this eruption covers the countenance of the earth: the animal and the vegetable: one in some degree the inversion of the other: the second rooted to the spot; the first coming detached out of its natal mud, and scurrying abroad with the myriad feet of insects, or towering into the heavens on the wings of birds: a thing so incomprehensible that, if it be well considered, the heart stops. To what passes with the anchored vermin, we have little clue: doubtless they have their joys and sorrows, their delights and killing agonies: it appears not how. But of the locomotory, to which we ourselves belong, we can tell more. These share with us a thousand miracles: the miracles of sight, of hearing, of the projection of sound, things that bridge space; the miracles of memory and reason, by which the present is conceived, and when it is gone its image kept living in the brains of man and brute; the miracle of reproduction, with its imperious desires and staggering consequences. And to put the last touch upon this mountain mass of the revolting and the inconceivable, all these prey upon each other, lives tearing other lives in pieces, cramming them inside themselves, and by that

summary process, growing fat: the vegetarian, the whale, perhaps the tree, not less than the lion of the desert; for the vegetarian is only the eater of the dumb.

Meanwhile our rotatory island loaded with predatory life, and more drenched with blood, both animal and vegetable, than ever mutinied ship, scuds through space with unimaginable speed, and turns alternate cheeks to the reverberation of a blazing world, ninety million miles away.

II

What a monstrous spectre is this man, the disease of the agglutinated dust, lifting alternate feet or lying drugged with slumber; killing, feeding, growing, bringing forth small copies of himself; grown upon with hair like grass, fitted with eyes that move and glitter in his face; a thing to set children screaming;—and yet looked at nearlier, known as his fellows know him, how surprising are his attributes! Poor soul, here for so little, cast among so many hardships, filled with desires so incommensurate and so inconsistent, savagely surrounded, savagely descended, irremediably condemned to prey upon his fellow lives: who should have blamed him had he been of a piece with his destiny and a being merely barbarous? And we look and behold him instead filled with imperfect virtues: infinitely childish, often admirably valiant, often touchingly kind; sitting down, amidst his momentary life, to debate of right and wrong and the attributes of the deity; rising up to do battle for an egg or die for an idea; singling out his friends and his mate with cordial affection; bringing forth in pain, rearing with long-suffering solicitude, his young. To touch the heart of his mystery, we find in him one thought, strange to the point of lunacy: the thought of duty; the thought of something owing to himself, to his neighbour, to his God; an ideal of decency, to which he would rise if it were possible; a limit of shame below which, if it be possible, he will

not stoop. The design in most men is one of conformity; here and there, in picked natures, it transcends itself and soars on the other side, arming martyrs with independence; but in all, in their degrees, it is a bosom thought:—Not in man alone, for we trace it in dogs and cats whom we know fairly well, and doubtless some similar point of honour sways the elephant, the oyster, and the louse, of whom we know so little:—But in man, at least, it sways with so complete an empire that merely selfish things come second, even with the selfish: that appetites are starved, fears are conquered, pains supported; that almost the dullest shrinks from the reproof of a glance, although it were a child's; and all but the most cowardly stand amid the risks of war; and the more noble, having strongly conceived an act as due to their ideal, affront and embrace death. Strange enough if, with their singular origin and perverted practice, they think they are to be rewarded in some future life: stranger still, if they are persuaded of the contrary, and think this blow which they solicit, will strike them senseless for eternity. I shall be reminded what a tragedy of misconception and misconduct man at large presents: of organized injustice, cowardly violence, and treacherous crime; and of the damning imperfections of the best. They cannot be too darkly drawn. Man is indeed marked for failure in his efforts to do right. But where the best consistently miscarry, how tenfold more remarkable that all should continue to strive; and surely we should find it both touching and inspiriting, that in a field from which success is banished, our race should not cease to labour.

If the first view of this creature, stalking in his rotatory isle, be a thing to shake the courage of the stoutest, on this nearer sight he startles us with an admiring wonder. It matters not where we look, under what climate we observe him, in what state of society, in what depth of ignorance, burthened with what erroneous morality; by camp-fires in Assiniboia, the snow powdering his shoulders, the wind plucking his blanket, as he sits, passing the

ceremonial calumet and uttering his grave opinions like a Roman senator; in ships at sea, a man inured to hardship and vile pleasures, his brightest hope a fiddle in a tavern and a bedizened trull who sells herself to rob him, and he for all that simple, innocent, cheerful, kindly like a child, constant to toil, brave to drown, for others; in the slums of cities, moving among indifferent millions to mechanical employments, without hope of change in the future, with scarce a pleasure in the present, and yet true to his virtues, honest up to his lights, kind to his neighbours, tempted perhaps in vain by the bright gin-palace, perhaps long suffering with the drunken wife that ruins him; in India (a woman this time) kneeling with broken cries and streaming tears, as she drowns her child in the sacred river; in the brothel, the discard of society, living mainly on strong drink, fed with affronts, a fool, a thief, the comrade of thieves, and even here keeping the point of honour and the touch of pity, often repaying the world's scorn with service, often standing firm upon a scruple, and at a certain cost rejecting riches:—everywhere some virtue cherished or affected, everywhere some decency of thought and carriage, everywhere the ensign of man's ineffectual goodness:—ah! if I could show you this! If I could show you these men and women, all the world over, in every stage of history, under every abuse of error, under every circumstance of failure, without hope, without help, without thanks, still obscurely fighting the lost fight of virtue, still clinging, in the brothel or on the scaffold, to some rag of honour, the poor jewel of their souls! They may seek to escape, and yet they cannot; it is not alone their privilege and glory, but their doom; they are condemned to some nobility; all their lives long, the desire of good is at their heels, the implacable hunter.

Of all earth's meteors, here at least is the most strange and consoling: that this ennobled lemur, this hair-crowned bubble of the dust, this inheritor of a few years and sorrows, should yet deny himself his rare delights, and add to his frequent pains, and live

for an ideal, however misconceived. Nor can we stop with man. A new doctrine received with screams a little while ago by canting moralists, and still not properly worked into the body of our thoughts, lights us a step farther into the heart of this rough but noble universe. For nowadays the pride of man denies in vain his kinship with the original dust. He stands no longer like a thing apart. Close at his heels we see the dog, prince of another genus: and in him too we see dumbly testified the same cultus of an unattainable ideal, the same constancy in failure. Does it stop with the dog? We look at our feet where the ground is blackened with the swarming ant: a creature so small, so far from us in the hierarchy of brutes, that we can scarce trace and scarce comprehend his doings; and here also, in his ordered polities and rigorous justice, we see confessed the law of duty and the fact of individual sin. Does it stop, then, with the ant? Rather this desire of well-doing and this doom of frailty run through all the grades of life: rather is this earth, from the frosty top of Everest to the next margin of the internal fire, one stage of ineffectual virtues and one temple of pious tears and perseverance. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together. It is the common and the god-like law of life. The browsers, the biters, the barkers, the hairy coats of field and forest, the squirrel in the oak, the thousand-footed creeper in the dust, as they share with us the gift of life, share with us the love of an ideal: strive like us—like us are tempted to grow weary of the struggle—to do well; like us receive at times unmerited refreshment, visitings of support, returns of courage; and are condemned like us to be crucified between that double law of the members and the will. Are they like us, I wonder, in the timid hope of some reward, some sugar with the drug? do they, too, stand aghast at unrewarded virtues, at the sufferings of those whom, in our partiality, we take to be just, and the prosperity of such as, in our blindness, we call wicked? It may be, and yet God knows what they should look for. Even while they look, even while they repent,

the foot of man treads them by thousands in the dust, the yelping hounds burst upon their trail, the bullet speeds, the knives are heating in the den of the vivisectionist; or the dew falls, and the generation of a day is blotted out. For these are creatures compared with whom our weakness is strength, our ignorance wisdom, our brief span eternity.

And as we dwell, we living things, in our isle of terror and under the imminent hand of death, God forbid it should be man the erected, the reasoner, the wise in his own eyes—God forbid it should be man that wearies in well-doing, that despairs of unrewarded effort, or utters the language of complaint. Let it be enough for faith, that the whole creation groans in mortal frailty, strives with unconquerable constancy. Surely not all in vain.

Gissing

Gissing

(1857-1903)

The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft appeared in the last year of George Gissing's life; while the book for the most part is clearly autobiographical, it unfortunately cannot be said to give the true account of the circumstances of his closing years. There is a pathetic disparity between the imaginary picture of Henry Ryecroft's sheltered serenity and the miserable reality of George Gissing's struggles against poverty and failure. Yet *Henry Ryecroft* reveals its author as few books do. If Gissing is silent upon many of the actual circumstances of his life—his three disastrous marriages, for instance—he still does not hesitate to give the reader the most intimate picture of his mind. He sets forth fully his hopes and fears, his enthusiasms and prejudices, his short-comings and his ideals. There emerges a remarkable self-portrait: the artist, resolved to do the best work of which he is capable, in a world which will have none of him; and the man, condemned by poverty to endure the strident city while longing for rural quietude, and destined by temperament as well as circumstances to communion only with books and with himself. Hazlitt has dealt more bitterly with the theme of man's essential solitariness, but not more poignantly than Gissing with his: "To every man it is decreed: thou shalt live alone. Happy they who imagine they have escaped the common lot; happy, whilst they imagine it."

To present *Henry Ryecroft* in small extracts is necessarily to give a limited picture of the book and its author. On the other hand, it is a volume from which excerpts can be taken without irreparable damage to its unity, for it is obvious that its only unity is in its portrayal of the author. Even a few pages, then, of the one book that Gissing wrote "for his own satisfaction," may serve to acquaint the reader with its quiet but pervasive charm, and its portrait of a noble though largely frustrate personality.

The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft (Extracts)[1]

FOR more than a week my pen has lain untouched. I have written nothing for seven whole days, not even a letter. Except during one or two bouts of illness, such a thing never happened in my life before. In my life; the life, that is, which had to be supported by anxious toil; the life which was not lived for living's sake, as all life should be, but under the goad of fear. The earning of money should be a means to an end; for more than thirty years—I began to support myself at sixteen—I had to regard it as the end itself.

I could imagine that my old penholder feels reproachfully towards me. Has it not served me well? Why do I, in my happiness, let it lie there neglected, gathering dust? The same penholder that has lain against my forefinger day after day, for—how many years? Twenty, at least; I remember buying it at a shop in Tottenham Court Road. By the same token I bought that day a paper-weight, which cost me a whole shilling—an extravagance which made me tremble. The penholder shone with its new varnish, now it is plain brown wood from end to end. On my forefinger it has made a callosity.

Old companion, yet old enemy! How many a time have I taken it up, loathing the necessity, heavy in head and heart, my hand shaking, my eyes sick-dazzled! How I dreaded the white page I had to foul with ink! Above all, on days such as this, when the blue hues of Spring laughed from between rosy clouds, when the sunlight shimmered upon my table and made me long, long all but to madness, for the scent of the flowering earth, for the green of hillside larches, for the singing of the skylark above the downs. There was a time—it seems

[1] taken by permission from George Gissing's *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, published and copyright by E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., New York.

further away than childhood—when I took my pen with eagerness; if my hand trembled it was with hope. But a hope that fooled me, for never a page of my writing deserved to live. I can say that now without bitterness. It was youthful error, and only the force of circumstance prolonged it. The world has done me no injustice; thank Heaven I have grown wise enough not to rail at it for this! And why should any man who writes, even if he write things immortal, nurse anger at the world's neglect? Who asked him to publish? Who promised him a hearing? Who has broken faith with him? If my shoemaker turn me out an excellent pair of boots, and I, in some mood of cantankerous unreason, throw them back upon his hands, the man has just cause of complaint. But your poem, your novel, who bargained with you for it? If it is honest journeywork, yet lacks purchasers, at most you may call yourself a hapless tradesman. If it come from on high, with what decency do you fret and fume because it is not paid for in heavy cash? For the work of man's mind there is one test, and one alone, the judgment of generations yet unborn. If you have written a great book, the world to come will know of it. But you don't care for posthumous glory. You want to enjoy fame in a comfortable armchair. Ah, that is quite another thing. Have the courage of your desire. Admit yourself a merchant, and protest to gods and men that the merchandise you offer is of better quality than much which sells for a high price. You may be right, and indeed it is hard upon you that Fashion does not turn to your stall.

. . . . . .

"Sir," said Johnson, "all the arguments which are brought to represent poverty as no evil, show it to be evidently a great evil. You never find people labouring to convince you that you may live very happily upon a plentiful fortune."

He knew what he was talking of, that rugged old master of

common sense. Poverty is of course a relative thing; the term has reference, above all, to one's standing as an intellectual being. If I am to believe the newspapers, there are title-bearing men and women in England who, had they an assured income of five-and-twenty shillings per week, would have no right to call themselves poor, for their intellectual needs are those of a stable-boy or scullery wench. Give me the same income and I can live, but I am poor indeed.

You tell me that money cannot buy the things most precious. Your commonplace proves that you have never known the lack of it. When I think of all the sorrow and the barrenness that has been wrought in my life by want of a few more pounds per annum than I was able to earn, I stand aghast at money's significance. What kindly joys have I lost, those simple forms of happiness to which every heart has claim, because of poverty! Meetings with those I loved made impossible year after year; sadness, misunderstanding, nay, cruel alienation, arising from inability to do the things I wished, and which I might have done had a little money helped me; endless instances of homely pleasure and contentment curtailed or forbidden by narrow means. I have lost friends merely through the constraints of my position; friends I might have made have remained strangers to me; solitude of the bitter kind, the solitude which is enforced at times when mind or heart longs for companionship, often cursed my life solely because I was poor. I think it would scarce be an exaggeration to say that there is no moral good which has not to be paid for in coin of the realm.

"Poverty," said Johnson again, "is so great an evil, and pregnant with so much temptation, so much misery, that I cannot but earnestly enjoin you to avoid it."

For my own part, I needed no injunction to that effort of avoidance. Many a London garret knows how I struggled with the unwelcome chamber-fellow. I marvel she did not abide with me to the end; it is a sort of inconsequence in nature, and

sometimes makes me vaguely uneasy through nights of broken sleep.

. . . . . .

Midway in my long walk yesterday, I lunched at a wayside inn. On the table lay a copy of a popular magazine. Glancing over this miscellany, I found an article, by a woman, on "Lion Hunting," and in this article I came upon a passage which seemed worth copying.

"As I woke my husband, the lion—which was then about forty yards off—charged straight towards us, and with my .303 I hit him full in the chest, as we afterwards discovered, tearing his windpipe to pieces and breaking his spine. He charged a second time, and the next shot hit him through the shoulder, tearing his heart to ribbons."

It would interest me to look upon this heroine of gun and pen. She is presumably quite a young woman; probably, when at home, a graceful figure in drawing-rooms. I should like to hear her talk, to exchange thoughts with her. She would give one a very good idea of the matron of old Rome who had her seat in the amphitheatre. Many of those ladies, in private life, must have been bright and gracious, high-bred and full of agreeable sentiment; they talked of art and of letters; they could drop a tear over Lesbia's sparrow;[2] at the same time, they were connoisseurs in torn windpipes, shattered spines and viscera rent open. It is not likely that many of them would have cared to turn their own hands to butchery, and, for the matter of that, I must suppose that our Lion Huntress of the popular magazine is rather an exceptional dame; but no doubt she and the Roman ladies would get on very well together, finding only a few superficial differences. The fact that her gory reminiscences are welcomed by an editor with the popular taste in view

[2] immortalized by Catullus.

is perhaps more significant than appears either to editor or public. Were this lady to write a novel (the chances are she will) it would have the true note of modern vigour. Of course her style has been formed by her favourite reading; more than probably, her ways of thinking and feeling owe much to the same source. If not so already, this will soon, I daresay, be the typical Englishwoman. Certainly, there is "no nonsense about her." Such women should breed a remarkable race.

I left the inn in rather a turbid humour. Moving homeward by a new way, I presently found myself on the side of a little valley, in which lay a farm and an orchard. The apple trees were in full bloom, and, as I stood gazing, the sun, which had all that day been niggard of its beams, burst forth gloriously. For what I then saw, I have no words; I can but dream of the still loveliness of that blossomed valley. Near me, a bee was humming; not far away, a cuckoo called; from the pasture of the farm below came a bleating of lambs.

. . . . . .

It has occurred to me that one might define Art as: an expression, satisfying and abiding, of the zest of life. This is applicable to every form of Art devised by man, for, in his creative moment, whether he produce a great drama or carve a piece of foliage in wood, the artist is moved and inspired by supreme enjoyment of some aspect of the world about him; an enjoyment in itself keener than that experienced by another man, and intensified, prolonged, by the power—which comes to him we know not how—of recording in visible or audible form that emotion of rare vitality. Art, in some degree, is within the scope of every human being, were he but the ploughman who utters a few would-be melodious notes, the mere outcome of health and strength, in the field of sunrise; he sings, or tries to, prompted by an unusual gusto in being, and the rude stave is all his own. Another was he, who also at the plough, sang

of the daisy, of the fieldmouse, or shaped the rhythmic tale of Tam o' Shanter. Not only had life a zest for him incalculably stronger and subtler than that which stirs the soul of Hodge, but he uttered it in word and music such as go to the heart of mankind, and hold a magic power for ages.

For some years there has been a great deal of talk about Art in our country. It began, I suspect, when the veritable artistic impulse of the Victorian time had flagged, when the energy of a great time was all but exhausted. Principles always become a matter of vehement discussion when practice is at ebb. Not by taking thought does one become an artist, or grow even an inch in that direction—which is not at all the same as saying that he who *is* an artist cannot profit by conscious effort. Goethe (the example so often urged by imitators unlike him in every feature of humanity) took thought enough about his Faust; but what of those youth-time lyrics, not the least precious of his achievements, which were scribbled as fast as pen could go, thwartwise on the paper, because he could not stop to set it straight? Dare I pen, even for my own eyes, the venerable truth that an artist is born and not made? It seems not superfluous, in times which have heard disdainful criticism of Scott, on the ground that he had no artistic conscience, that he scribbled without a thought of style, that he never elaborated his scheme before beginning—as Flaubert, of course you know, invariably did. Why, after all, has one not heard that a certain William Shakespeare turned out his so-called works of art with something like criminal carelessness? Is it not a fact that a bungler named Cervantes was so little in earnest about his Art that, having in one chapter described the stealing of Sancho's donkey, he presently, in mere forgetfulness, shows us Sancho riding on Dapple, as if nothing had happened? Does not one Thackeray shamelessly avow on the last page of a grossly "subjective" novel that he had killed Lord Farintosh's mother at one page and brought her to life

again at another? These sinners against Art are none the less among the world's supreme artists, for they *lived*, in a sense, in a degree, unintelligible to these critics of theirs, and their work is an expression, satisfying and abiding, of the zest of life.

Someone, no doubt, hit upon this definition of mine long ago. It doesn't matter; is it the less original with me? Not long since I should have fretted over the possibility, for my living depended on an avoidance of even seeming plagiarism. Now I am at one with Lord Foppington,[3] and much disposed to take pleasure in the natural sprouts of my own wit—without troubling whether the same idea has occurred to others. Suppose me, in total ignorance of Euclid, to have discovered even the simplest of his geometrical demonstrations, shall I be crestfallen when someone draws attention to the book? These natural sprouts are, after all, the best products of our life; it is a mere accident that they may have no value in the world's market. One of my conscious efforts, in these days of freedom, is to live intellectually for myself. Formerly, when in reading I came upon anything that impressed or delighted me, down it went in my note-book, for "use." I could not read a striking verse, or sentence of prose, without thinking of it as an apt quotation in something I might write—one of the evil results of a literary life. Now that I strive to repel this habit of thought, I find myself asking: To what end, then, do I read and remember? Surely as foolish a question as ever man put to himself. You read for your own pleasure, for your solace and strengthening. Pleasure, then, purely selfish? Solace which endures for an hour, and strengthening for no combat? Ay, but I know, I know. With what heart should I live here in my cottage, waiting for life's end, were it not for those hours of seeming idle reading?

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[3] cf. the opening of Lamb's "Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading," p. 383.

I think sometimes, how good it were had I someone by me to listen when I am tempted to read a passage aloud. Yes, but is there any mortal in the whole world upon whom I could invariably depend for sympathetic understanding?—nay, who would even generally be at one with me in my appreciation. Such harmony of intelligences is the rarest thing. All through life we long for it: the desire drives us, like a demon, into waste places; too often ends by plunging us into mud and morass. And, after all, we learn that the vision was illusory. To every man is it decreed: thou shalt live alone. Happy they who imagine that they have escaped the common lot; happy, whilst they imagine it. Those to whom no such happiness has ever been granted at least avoid the bitterest of disillusions. And is it not always good to face the truth, however discomfortable? The mind which renounces, once and for ever, a futile hope, has its compensation in ever-growing calm.

. . . . . .

Every morning when I awake, I thank heaven for silence. This is my orison. I remember the London days when sleep was broken by clash and clang, by roar and shriek, and when my first sense on returning to consciousness was hatred of the life about me. Noises of wood and metal, clattering of wheels, banging of implements, jangling of bells—all such things are bad enough, but worse still is the clamorous human voice. Nothing on earth is more irritating to me than a bellow or scream of idiot mirth, nothing more hateful than a shout or yell of brutal anger. Were it possible, I would never again hear the utterance of a human tongue, save from those few who are dear to me.

Here, wake at what hour I may, early or late, I lie amid gracious stillness. Perchance a horse's hoof rings rhythmically upon the road; perhaps a dog barks from a neighbour farm; it may be that there comes the far, soft murmur of a train

from the other side of Exe; but these are almost the only sounds that could force themselves upon my ear. A voice, at any time of the day, is the rarest thing.

But there is the rustle of branches in the morning breeze; there is the music of a sunny shower against the window; there is the matin song of birds. Several times lately I have lain wakeful when there sounded the first note of the earliest lark; it makes me almost glad of my restless nights. The only trouble that touches me in these moments is the thought of my long life wasted amid the senseless noises of man's world. Year after year this spot has known the same tranquillity; with ever so little of good fortune, with ever so little wisdom, beyond what was granted me, I might have blessed my manhood with calm, might have made for myself in later life a long retrospect of bowered peace. As it is, I enjoy with something of sadness, remembering that this melodious silence is but the prelude of that deeper stillness which waits to enfold us all.

. . . . . .

In this high summertide, I remember with a strange feeling that there are people who, of their free choice, spend day and night in cities, who throng to the gabble of drawing-rooms, make festival in public eating-houses, sweat in the glare of the theatre. They call it life; they call it enjoyment. Why, so it is, for them; they are so made. The folly is mine, to wonder that they fulfil their destiny.

But with what deep and quiet thanksgiving do I remind myself that never shall I mingle with that well-millinered and tailored herd! Happily, I never saw much of them. Certain occasions I recall when a supposed necessity took me into their dismal precincts; a sick buzzing in the brain, a languor as of exhausted limbs, comes upon me with the memory. The relief with which I stepped out into the street again, when all was over! Dear to me then was poverty, which for the moment

seemed to make me a free man. Dear to me was the labour at my desk, which, by comparison, enabled me to respect myself.

Never again shall I shake hands with man or woman who is not in truth my friend. Never again shall I go to see acquaintances with whom I have no acquaintance. All men my brothers? Nay, thank Heaven, that they are not! I will do harm, if I can help it, to no one; I will wish good to all; but I will make no pretence of personal kindliness where, in the nature of things, it cannot be felt. I have grimaced a smile and pattered unmeaning words to many a person whom I despised or from whom in heart I shrank; I did so because I had not courage to do otherwise. For a man conscious of such weakness, the best is to live apart from the world. Brave Samuel Johnson! One such truth-teller is worth all the moralists and preachers who ever laboured to humanize mankind. Had *he* withdrawn into solitude, it would have been a national loss. Every one of his blunt, fearless words had more value than a whole evangel on the lips of a timidly good man. It is thus that the commonalty, however well clad, should be treated. So seldom does the fool or the ruffian in broadcloth hear his just designation; so seldom is the man found who has a right to address him by it. By the bandying of insults we profit nothing; there can be no useful rebuke which is exposed to a *tu quoque*.[4] But, as the world is, an honest and wise man should have a rough tongue. Let him speak and spare not!

. . . . . .

A long time since I wrote in this book. In September I caught a cold, which meant three weeks' illness.

I have not been suffering; merely feverish and weak and unable to use my mind for anything but a daily hour or two

[4] You're another (literally, you too).

of the lightest reading. The weather has not favoured my recovery, wet winds often blowing, and not much sun. Lying in bed, I have watched the sky, studied the clouds, which—so long as they are clouds indeed, and not a mere waste of grey vapour—always have their beauty. Inability to read has always been my horror; once, a trouble of the eyes all but drove me mad with fear of blindness; but I find that in my present circumstances, in my own still house, with no intrusion to be dreaded, with no task or care to worry me, I can fleet the time not unpleasantly even without help of books. Reverie, unknown to me in the days of bondage, has brought me solace; I hope it has a little advanced me in wisdom.

For not, surely, by deliberate effort of thought does a man grow wise. The truths of life are not discovered by us. At moments unforeseen, some gracious influence descends upon the soul, touching it to an emotion which, we know not how, the mind transmutes into thought. This can happen only in a calm of the senses, a surrender of the whole being to passionless contemplation. I understand, now, the intellectual mood of the quietist.

Of course my good housekeeper has tended me perfectly, with the minimum of needless talk. Wonderful woman!

If the evidence of a well-spent life is necessarily seen in "honour, love, obedience, troops of friends," mine, it is clear, has fallen short of a moderate ideal. Friends I have had, and have; but very few. Honour and obedience—why, by a stretch, Mrs. M—— may perchance represent these blessings. As for love——?

Let me tell myself the truth. Do I really believe that at any time of my life I have been the kind of man who merits affection? I think not. I have always been much too self-absorbed; too critical of all about me; too unreasonably proud. Such men as I live and die alone, however much in appearance accompanied. I do not repine at it; nay, lying day after day

in solitude and silence, I have felt glad that it was so. At least I give no one trouble, and that is much. Most solemnly do I hope that in the latter days no long illness awaits me. May I pass quickly from this life of quiet enjoyment to the final peace. So shall no one think of me with pained sympathy or with weariness. One—two—even three may possibly feel regret, come the end how it may, but I do not flatter myself that to them I am more than an object of kindly thought at long intervals. It is enough; it signifies that I have not erred wholly. And when I think that my daily life testifies to an act of kindness such as I could never have dreamt of meriting from the man who performed it, may I not be much more than content?

Contemporary Essayists

Contemporary Essayists

THE FOLLOWING SELECTIONS illustrate varied phases of the familiar essay in our own day. The contrast between the graceful triviality of the Beerbohm essay and the sombre but inspiring eloquence of Bertrand Russell's *credo* may be taken as typical of the wide range and varied subject matter which now, as ever, mark the field of the essay. A few words, then, on each of the four writers who have been selected to represent the contemporary essay.

A reviewer recently protested against the use of the term "incomparable" which certain publishers had applied to one of their authors. The adjective in question, the critic pointed out, is generally understood to be reserved for one writer only: "the incomparable Max." This is indeed Mr. Beerbohm's happy fate—to be accepted as a classic in his own lifetime. After his *Works*, as he somewhat short-sightedly called his first volume, in 1895, there have followed *More, Yet Again, And Even Now*, and, most recently, *A Variety of Things*. Besides these collections of essays there is his delightful novel, *Zuleika Dobson*, his caricatures, in drawing and in words, and his parodies. Mr. Beerbohm's writing is marked always by its exquisiteness, its easy achievement of the most delicate precision in word and phrase.

Hilaire Belloc, of mixed French and English ancestry, is perhaps best known as a historian with a strong pro-Catholic bias. Like G. K. Chesterton, he presents the cause of the Mother Church trenchantly and militantly. Again like Mr. Chesterton, he is also a charming essayist. Most of his rambling, Montaignesque essays are to be found in the volumes he has called *On Nothing, On Everything, On Anything*, and—perhaps inevitably—*On*. In addition, *The Path to Rome* is a volume that should not be missed by lovers of the literature of the open road. The present selection beautifully sets forth, and makes as nearly comprehensible as may be, a most elusive mystical subject.

Logan Pearsall Smith, American by birth but English by residence, has made a unique contribution to the familiar essay in his two small volumes, *Trivia* and *More Trivia*. These fugitive meditations, wherein the reader sees himself as well as the author mirrored with amazing fidelity, are indeed *sui generis*. Their happy audacity is not more remarkable than the consummate felicity of their expression. Mr. Smith

is also an amateur but erudite philologist, presenting the mother tongue, in *The English Language* and *Words and Idioms*, with a distinction that is exceptional indeed in books on language. The *Trivia* enthusiasts, however, clamor for more *Trivia* and are but partially appeased when there appears, at rare intervals, such a distinguished essay as "The Prospects of Literature."

Bertrand Russell is one of the foremost thinkers of the English-speaking world. Primarily a philosopher and a mathematician, the range of his interests may be suggested by the titles of some of his books: *The A. B. C. of Relativity, Why Men Fight, Education and the Good Life, Marriage and Morals.* His attitude is ever that of the crusader: to abolish the hideous curse of war, to free men from the bondage of superstition and fear, to develop the boundless possibilities of the mind, to cultivate the art of right living. The present essay may fittingly terminate, for the moment, the record of the essayists' speculations on man's origin and destiny. Without it, one would scarcely have imagined that the agnostic position could be so magnificently presented. Its splendid climax is not an unworthy pendant to the conclusion of *Prometheus Unbound:*

> To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
> To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
> To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
> To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
> From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
> Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
> This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
> Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
> This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

Going Out for a Walk[1]

IT IS a fact that not once in all my life have I gone out for a walk. I have been taken out for walks; but that is another matter. Even while I trotted prattling by my nurse's side I regretted the good old days when I had, and wasn't, a perambulator. When I grew up it seemed to me that the one

[1] taken by permission from Max Beerbohm's *And Even Now*, published and copyright by E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., New York.

advantage of living in London was that nobody ever wanted me to come out for a walk. London's very drawbacks—its endless noise and bustle, its smoky air, the squalor ambushed everywhere in it—assured this one immunity. Whenever I was with friends in the country, I knew that at any moment, unless rain were actually falling, some man might suddenly say "Come out for a walk!" in that sharp imperative tone which he would not dream of using in any other connexion. People seem to think there is something inherently noble and virtuous in the desire to go for a walk. Any one thus desirous feels that he has a right to impose his will on whomever he sees comfortably settled in an arm-chair, reading. It is easy to say simply "No" to an old friend. In the case of a mere acquaintance one wants some excuse. "I wish I could, but"—nothing ever occurs to me except "I have some letters to write." This formula is unsatisfactory in three ways. (1) It isn't believed. (2) It compels you to rise from your chair, go to the writing-table, and sit improvising a letter to somebody until the walkmonger (just not daring to call you liar and hypocrite) shall have lumbered out of the room. (3) It won't operate on Sunday mornings. "There's no post out till this evening" clinches the matter; and you may as well go quietly.

Walking for walking's sake may be as highly laudable and exemplary a thing as it is held to be by those who practise it. My objection to it is that it stops the brain. Many a man has professed to me that his brain never works so well as when he is swinging along the high road or over hill and dale. This boast is not confirmed by my memory of anybody who on a Sunday morning has forced me to partake of his adventure. Experience teaches me that whatever fellow-guest may have of power to instruct or to amuse when he is sitting on a chair, or standing on a hearth-rug, quickly leaves him when he takes one out for a walk. The ideas that came so thick and fast to him in any room, where are they now? where that encyclopædic

knowledge which he bore so lightly? where the kindling fancy that played like summer lightning over *any* topic that was started? The man's face that was so mobile is set now; gone is the light from his fine eyes. He says that A. (our host) is a thoroughly good fellow. Fifty yards further on, he adds that A. is one of the best fellows he has ever met. We tramp another furlong or so, and he says that Mrs. A. is a charming woman. Presently he adds that she is one of the most charming women he has ever known. We pass an inn. He reads vapidly aloud to me: "The King's Arms. Licensed to sell Ales and Spirits." I foresee that during the rest of the walk he will read aloud any inscription that occurs. We pass a milestone. He points at it with his stick, and says "Uxminster. 11 Miles." We turn a sharp corner at the foot of a hill. He points at the wall, and says "Drive Slowly." I see far ahead, on the other side of the hedge bordering the high road, a small notice-board. He sees it too. He keeps his eye on it. And in due course "Trespassers," he says, "Will Be Prosecuted." Poor man!—mentally a wreck.

Luncheon at the A.s, however, salves him and floats him in full sail. Behold him once more the life and soul of the party. Surely he will never, after the bitter lesson of this morning, go out for another walk. An hour later, I see him striding forth, with a new companion. I watch him out of sight. I know what he is saying. He is saying that I am rather a dull man to go a walk with. He will presently add that I am one of the dullest men he ever went a walk with. Then he will devote himself to reading out the inscriptions.

How comes it, this immediate deterioration in those who go walking for walking's sake? Just what happens? I take it that not by his reasoning faculties is a man urged to this enterprise. He is urged, evidently, by something in him that transcends reason; by his soul, I presume. Yes, it must be

the soul that raps out the "Quick march!" to the body.—"Halt! —Stand at ease!" interposes the brain, and "To what destination," it suavely asks the soul, "and on what errand, are you sending the body?"—"On no errand whatsoever," the soul makes answer, "and to no destination at all. It is just like you to be always on the look-out for some subtle ulterior motive. The body is going out because the mere fact of its doing so is a sure indication of nobility, probity, and rugged grandeur of character."—"Very well, Vagula, have your own wayula! But I," says the brain, "flatly refuse to be mixed up in this tom-foolery. I shall go to sleep till it is over." The brain then wraps itself up in its own convolutions, and falls into a dreamless slumber from which nothing can rouse it till the body has been safely deposited indoors again.

Even if you go to some definite place, for some definite purpose, the brain would rather you took a vehicle; but it does not make a point of this; it will serve you well enough unless you are going *out for a walk*. It won't, while your legs are vying with each other, do any deep thinking for you, nor even any close thinking; but it will do any number of small odd jobs for you willingly—provided that your legs, also, are making themselves useful, not merely bandying you about to gratify the pride of the soul. Such as it is, this essay was composed in the course of a walk, this morning. I am not one of those extremists who must have a vehicle to every destination. I never go out of my way, as it were, to avoid exercise. I take it as it comes, and take it in good part. That valetudinarians are always chattering about it, and indulging in it to excess, is no reason for despising it. I am inclined to think that in moderation it is rather good for one, physically. But, pending a time when no people wish me to go and see them, and I have no wish to go and see any one, and there is nothing whatever for me to do off my own premises, I never will go out for a walk.

On an Unknown Country[1]

TEN years ago, I think, or perhaps a little less or perhaps a little more, I came in the Euston Road—that thoroughfare of Empire—upon a young man a little younger than myself whom I knew, though I did not know him very well. It was drizzling and the second-hand booksellers (who are rare in this thoroughfare) were beginning to put out the waterproof covers over their wares. This disturbed my acquaintance, because he was engaged upon buying a cheap book that should really satisfy him.

Now this was difficult, for he had no hobby, and the book which should satisfy him must be one that should describe or summon up, it is better to say, hint at—or, the theologians would say, reveal, or the Platonist would say *recall*—the Unknown Country, which he thought was his very home.

I had known his habit of seeking such books for two years, and had half wondered at it and half sympathized. It was an appetite partly satisfied by almost any work that brought to him the vision of a place in the mind which he had always intensely desired, but to which, as he had then long guessed, and as he is now quite certain, no human paths directly lead. He would buy with avidity travels to the moon and to the planets, from the most worthless to the best. He loved Utopias and did not disregard even so prosaic a category as books of real travel, so long as by exaggeration or by a glamour in the style they gave him a full draft of that drug which he desired. Whether this satisfaction the young man sought was a satisfaction in illusion (I have used the word "drug" with hesitation), or whether it was, as he persistently maintained, the satisfaction of a memory, or whether it was, as I am often

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[1] taken by permission from Hilaire Belloc's *On Nothing*, published by E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., New York.

tempted to think, the satisfaction of a thirst which will ultimately be quenched in every human soul I cannot tell. Whatever it was, he sought it with more than the appetite with which a hungry man seeks food. He sought it with something that was not hunger but passion.

That evening he found a book.

It is well known that men purchase with difficulty second-hand books upon the stalls, and that in some mysterious way the sellers of these books are content to provide a kind of library for the poorer and more eager of the public, and a library admirable in this, that it is accessible upon every shelf and exposes a man to no control, except that he must not steal, and even in this it is nothing but the force of public law that interferes. My friend therefore would in the natural course of things have dipped into the book and left it there; but a better luck persuaded him. Whether it was the beginning of the rain or a sudden loneliness in such terrible weather and in such a terrible town, compelling him to seek a more permanent companionship with another mind, or whether it was my sudden arrival and shame lest his poverty should appear in his refusing to buy the book—whatever it was, he bought that same. And since he bought the Book I also have known it and have found in it, as he did, the most complete expression that I know of the Unknown Country, of which he was a citizen—oddly a citizen, as I then thought, wisely as I now conceive.

All that can best be expressed in words should be expressed in verse, but verse is a slow thing to create; nay, it is not really created; it is a secretion of the mind, it is a pearl that gathers round some irritant and slowly expresses the very essence of beauty and of desire that has lain long, potential and unexpressed, in the mind of the man who secretes it. God knows that this Unknown Country has been hit off in verse a hundred times. If I were perfectly sure of my accents I would quote two lines from the *Odyssey* in which the Unknown Country

stands out as clear as does a sudden vision when the mist lifts after a long climb and one sees beneath one an unexpected and glorious land; such a vision as greets a man when he comes over the Saldeu into the simple and secluded Republic of the Andorrans.[2] Then, again, the Germans in their idioms have flashed it out, I am assured, for I remember a woman telling me that there was a song by Schiller which exactly gave the revelation of which I speak. In English, thank Heaven, emotion of this kind, emotion necessary to the life of the soul, is very abundantly furnished. As, who does not know the lines:

> Blessed with that which is not in the word
> Of man nor his conception: Blessed Land!

Then there is also the whole group of glimpses which Shakespeare amused himself by scattering as might a man who had a great oak chest full of jewels and who now and then, out of kindly fun, poured out a handful and gave them to his guests. I quote from memory, but I think certain of the lines run more or less like this:

> Look how the dawn in russet mantle clad
> Stands on the steep of yon high eastern hill.[3]

And again:

> Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
> Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.[4]

Which moves me to digress . . . How on earth did any living man pull it off as well as that? I remember arguing with a man who very genuinely thought the talent of Shakespeare was exaggerated in public opinion, and discovering at the end

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[2] an independent, and curiously isolated commonwealth in the Pyrenees.
[3] inaccurately quoted from the end of the opening scene of *Hamlet*.
[4] from Romeo's leave-taking at dawn, III, 5.

of a long wrangle that he was not considering Shakespeare as a poet. But as a poet, then, how on earth did he manage it?

Keats did it continually, especially in the "Hyperion." Milton does it so well in the Fourth Book of *Paradise Lost* that I defy any man of a sane understanding to read the whole of that book before going to bed and not to wake up next morning as though he had been on a journey. William Morris does it, especially in the verses [5] about a prayer over the corn; and as for Virgil, the poet Virgil, he does it continually like a man whose very trade it is. Who does not remember the swimmer who saw Italy from the top of the wave?

Here also let me digress. How do the poets do it? (I do not mean where do they get their power, as I was asking just now of Shakespeare, but how do the words, simple or complex, produce that effect?) Very often there is not any adjective, sometimes not any qualification at all: often only one subject with its predicate and its statement and its object. There is never any detail of description, but the scene rises, more vivid in color, more exact in outline, more wonderful in influence, than anything we can see with our eyes, except perhaps those things we see in the few moments of intense emotion which come to us, we know not whence, and expand out into completion and into manhood. Catullus does it. He does it so powerfully in the opening lines of "Vesper adest . . ." [6] that a man reads the first couplet of that Hymeneal, and immediately perceives the Apennines.

The nameless translator of the Highland song does it, especially when he advanced that battering line:

> And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.

They all do it, bless their hearts, the poets, which leads me

[5] "Summer Dawn."
[6] "The evening is here; arise, ye youths."

back again to the mournful reflection that it cannot be done in prose. . . .

Little friends, my readers, I wish it could be done in prose, for if it could, and if I knew how to do it, I would here present to you that Unknown Country in such a fashion that every landscape which you should see henceforth could be transformed, by the appearing through it, the shining and uplifting through it, of the Unknown Country upon which reposes this tedious and repetitive world.

Now you may say to me that prose can do it, and you may quote to me the end of *The Pilgrim's Progress,* a very remarkable piece of writing. Or, better still, as we shall be more agreed upon it, the general impression left upon the mind by the book which set me writing—Mr. Hudson's *Crystal Age.*[7] I do not deny that prose can do it, but when it does it, it is hardly to be called prose, for it is inspired. Note carefully the passages in which the trick is worked in prose (for instance, in the story of Ruth in the Bible, where it is done with complete success), you will perceive an incantation and a spell. Indeed this same episode of Ruth in exile has inspired two splendid passages of European verse, of which it is difficult to say which is the more national, and therefore the greatest, Victor Hugo's in the *Legende des Siecles* or Keats's astounding four lines.[8]

. . . . . .

There was a shepherd the other day up at Findon Fair who had come from the east by Lewes with sheep, and who had in his eyes that reminiscence of horizons which makes the eyes of shepherds and of mountaineers different from the eyes of other men. He was occupied when I came upon him in pulling Mr. Fulton's sheep by one hind leg so that they should go

[7] a Utopian novel by W. H. Hudson, who is more famous as the author of *Green Mansions.*

[8] in the "Ode to a Nightingale."

the way they were desired to go. It happened that day that Mr. Fulton's sheep were not sold, and the shepherd went driving them back through Findon Village, and up on to the High Downs. I went with him to hear what he had to say, for shepherds talk quite differently from other men. And when we came on to the shoulder of Chanctonbury and looked down upon the Weald, which stretched out like the Plains of Heaven, he said to me: "I never come here but it seems like a different place down below, and as though it were not the place where I have gone afoot with sheep under the hills. It seems different when you are looking down at it." He added that he had never known why. Then I knew that he, like myself, was perpetually in perception of the Unknown Country, and I was very pleased. But we did not say anything more to each other about it until we got down into Steyning. There we drank together and we still said nothing about it, so that to this day all we know of the matter is what we knew when we started, and what you knew when I began to write this, and what you are now no further informed upon, namely, that there is an Unknown Country lying beneath the places that we know, and appearing only in moments of revelation.

Whether we shall reach this country at last or whether we shall not, it is impossible to determine.

Trivia (*Extracts*[1])

Preface

"YOU must beware of thinking too much about style," said my kindly adviser, "or you will become like those fastidious people who polish and polish until there is nothing left."

"Then there really are such people?" I asked eagerly. But

[1] from *Trivia* by Logan Pearsall Smith, copyright 1917 by Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.

the well-informed lady could give me no precise information about them.

I often hear of them in this tantalizing manner, and perhaps one day I shall have the luck to meet them.

The Author

THESE pieces of moral prose have been written, dear Reader, by a large Carnivorous Mammal, belonging to that sub-order of the Animal Kingdom which includes also the Orang-outang, the tusked Gorilla, the Baboon with his bright blue and scarlet bottom, and the gentle Chimpanzee.

The Afternoon Post

THE village Post Office, with its clock and letter-box, its postmistress lost in tales of love-lorn Earls and coroneted woe, and the sallow-faced grocer watching from his window opposite, is the scene of a daily crisis in my life, when every afternoon I walk there through the country lanes and ask that well-read young lady for my letters. I always expect good news and cheques; and then, of couse, there is the magical Fortune which is coming, and word of it may reach me any day. What it is, this strange Felicity, or whence it shall come, I have no notion; but I hurry down in the morning to find the news on the breakfast table, open telegrams in delighted panic, and cry "Here it comes!" when in the night silence I hear wheels approaching along the road. So, happy in the hope of Happiness, and not greatly concerned with any other interest or ambition, I live on in my quiet, ordered house; and so I shall live perhaps until the end. Is it, indeed, merely the last great summons and revelation for which I am waiting? I do not know.

The Busy Bees

SITTING for hours idle in the shade of an apple tree, near the garden hives, and under the aerial thoroughfares of those honey-merchants—sometimes when the noonday heat is loud with their minute industry, or when they fall in crowds out of the late sun to their night-long labours—I have sought instruction from the Bees, and tried to appropriate to myself the old industrious lesson.

And yet, hang it all, who by rights should be the teacher and who the learners? For those peevish, over-toiled, utilitarian insects, was there no lesson to be derived from the spectacle of Me? Gazing out at me with myriad eyes from their joyless factories, might they not learn at last—might I not finally teach them—a wiser and more generous-hearted way to improve the shining hours?

The Stars

BATTLING my way homeward one dark night against the wind and rain, a sudden gust, stronger than the others, drove me back into the shelter of a tree. But soon the Western sky broke open; the illumination of the Stars poured down from behind the dispersing clouds.

I was astonished at their brightness, to see how they filled the night with their soft lustre. So I went my way accompanied by them; Arcturus followed me, and becoming entangled in a leafy tree, shone by glimpses, and then emerged triumphant, Lord of the Western sky. Moving along the road in the silence of my own footsteps, my thoughts were among the Constellations. I was one of the Princes of the starry Universe; in me also there was something that was not insignificant and mean and of no account.

In Church

"FOR the Pen," said the Vicar; and in the sententious pause that followed, I felt that I would offer any gifts of gold to avert or postpone the solemn, inevitable, and yet, as it seemed to me, perfectly appalling statement that "the Pen is mightier than the Sword."

High Life

ALTHOUGH that immense Country House was empty and for sale, and I had got an order to view it, I needed all my courage to walk through the lordly gates, and up the avenue, and then to ring the door-bell. And when I was ushered in, and the shutters were removed to let the daylight into those vast apartments, I sneaked through them, cursing the dishonest curiosity which had brought me into a place where I had no business. But I was treated with such deference, and so plainly regarded as a possible purchaser, that I soon began to believe in the opulence imputed to me. From all the novels describing the mysterious and glittering life of the Great which I had read (and I had read thousands), there came to me the enchanting vision of my own existence in this Palace. I filled those vast halls with the shine of jewels and stir of voices; I saw a vision of ladies sweeping in their tiaras down the splendid stairs.

But my Soul, in her swell of pride, soon outgrew these paltry limits. Oh no! Never could I box up and house and localize under that roof the Pomp, the Ostentation of which I was capable.

Then for one thing there was stabling for only forty horses; and of course, as I told them, this would never do.

Vertigo

NO! I don't like it; I can't approve of it; I have always thought it most regrettable that serious and ethical Thinkers like ourselves should go scuttling through space in this undignified manner. Is it seemly that I, at my age, should be hurled with my books of reference, and bed-clothes, and hot-water bottle, across the sky at the unthinkable rate of nineteen miles a second? As I say, I don't at all like it. This universe of astronomical whirligigs makes me a little giddy.

That God should spend His eternity—which might be so much better employed—in spinning countless Solar Systems, and sky-larking, like a great child, with tops and teetotums—is not this a serious scandal? I wonder what all our circumgyrating Monotheists really do think of it?

The Evil Eye

DRAWN by the unfelt wind in my little sail over the shallow estuary, I lay in my boat, lost in a dream of mere existence. The cool water glided through my trailing fingers; and leaning over, I watched the sands that slid beneath me, the weeds that languidly swayed with the boat's motion. I was the cool water, I was the gliding sand and the swaying weed, I was the sea and sky and sun, I was the whole vast Universe.

Suddenly between my eyes and the sandy bottom a mirrored face looked up at me, floating on the smooth film of water over which I glided. At one look from that too familiar, and yet how sinister and goblin a face, my immeasurable soul collapsed like a wrecked balloon; I shrank sadly back into my named personality, and sat there, shabby, hot, and very much bored with myself in my little boat.

Dissatisfaction

FOR one thing I hate Spiders—I dislike all kinds of Insects. Their cold intelligence, their empty, stereotyped, unremitted industry repel me. And I am not altogether happy about the future of the Human Race; when I think of the slow refrigeration of the Earth, the Sun's waning, and the ultimate, inevitable collapse of the Solar System, I have grave misgivings. And all the books I have read and forgotten—the thought that my mind is really nothing but a sieve—this, too, at times disheartens me.

A Greeting

"WHAT funny clothes you wear, dear Readers! And your hats! The thought of your hats does make me laugh. And I think your sex-theories quite horrid."

Thus across the great gulf of Time I send, with a wave of my hand, a greeting to that quaint, remote, outlandish, unborn people whom we call Posterity, and whom I, like other very great writers, claim as my readers—urging them to hurry up and get born, that they may have the pleasure of reading "Trivia."

At the Bank

ENTERING the Bank in a composed manner, I drew a cheque and handed it to the cashier through the grating. Then I eyed him narrowly. Would not that astute official see that I was only posing as a Real Person? No; he calmly opened a little drawer, took out some real sovereigns, counted them carefully, and handed them to me in a brass shovel. I went

away feeling I had perpetrated a delightful fraud. I had got some of the gold of the actual world.

Yet now and then, at the sight of my name on a visiting card, or of my face photographed in a group among other faces, or when I see a letter addressed in my hand, or catch the sound of my own voice, I grow shy in the presence of a mysterious Person who is myself, is known by my name, and who apparently does exist. Can it be possible that I am as real as any one else, and that all of us—the cashier and banker at the Bank, the King on his throne—all feel ourselves like ghosts and goblins in this authentic world?

Social Success

THE servant gave me my coat and hat, and in a glow of self-satisfaction I walked out into the night. "A delightful evening," I reflected, "the nicest kind of people. What I said about finance and French philosophy impressed them; and how they laughed when I imitated a pig squealing."

But soon after, "God, it's awful," I muttered, "I wish I were dead."

The Goat

IN THE midst of my anecdote a sudden misgiving chilled me—had I told them about this Goat before? And then as I talked there gaped on me—abyss opening beneath abyss—a darker speculation: when goats are mentioned, do I automatically and always tell this story about the Goat at Portsmouth?

Green Ivory

WHAT a bore it is, waking up in the morning always the same person. I wish I were unflinching and emphatic, and had big, bushy eyebrows and a Message for the Age. I wish I were a deep Thinker, or a great Ventriloquist.

I should like to be refined and melancholy, the victim of a hopeless passion; to love in the old, stilted way, with impossible Adoration and Despair under the pale-faced Moon.

I wish I could get up; I wish I were the world's greatest Violinist. I wish I had lots of silver, and first Editions, and green ivory.

"Where Do I Come In?"

WHEN I read in the "Times" about India and all its problems and populations; when I look at the letters in large type of important personages, and find myself face to face with the Questions, Movements, and great Activities of the Age, "Where do I come in?" I ask uneasily.

Then in the great "Times" reflected world I find the corner where I ply my humble but necessary part. For I am one of the unpraised, unrewarded millions without whom Statistics would be a bankrupt science. It is we who are born, who marry, who die, in constant ratios; who regularly lose so many umbrellas, post just so many unaddressed letters every year. And there are enthusiasts among us, Heroes who, without the least thought of their own convenience, allow omnibuses to run over them, or throw themselves month by month, in fixed numbers, from the London bridges.

Talk

ONCE in a while, when doors are closed and curtains drawn on a group of free spirits, the miracle happens, and Good Talk begins. 'Tis a sudden illumination—the glow, it may be of sanctified candles, or more likely, the blaze around a cauldron of gossip.

Is there an ecstasy or any intoxication like it? Oh, to talk, to talk people into monsters, to talk one's self out of one's clothes, to talk God from His heaven, to say everything, and turn everything in the world into a bright tissue of phrases!

These Pentecosts and outpourings of the spirit can only occur very rarely, or the Universe itself would be soon talked out of existence.

Misgiving

WE WERE talking of people, and a name familiar to us all was mentioned. We paused and looked at each other; then soon, by means of anecdotes and clever touches, that personality was reconstructed, and seemed to appear before us, large, pink, and life-like, and give a comic sketch of itself with appropriate poses.

What fun it was! "But of course," I said to myself, "this sort of thing never happens to me." For the notion was quite unthinkable, the notion, I mean, of my own dear image, called up like this without my knowledge, to turn my discreet way of life into a cake-walk.

Consolation

THE other day, depressed on the Underground, I tried to cheer myself by thinking over the joys of our human lot. But there wasn't one of them for which I seemed to care a

button—not Wine, nor Fame, nor Friendship, nor Eating, nor Making Love, nor the Consciousness of Virtue. Was it worth while then going way up in a lift into a world that had nothing less trite to offer?

Then I thought of reading—the nice and subtle happiness of reading. This was enough, this joy not dulled by Age, this polite and unpunished vice, this selfish, serene, life-long intoxication.

Under an Umbrella

FROM under the roof of my umbrella I saw the washed pavement lapsing beneath my feet, the news-posters lying smeared with dirt at the crossings, the tracks of the buses in the liquid mud. On I went through this dreary world of wetness. And through how many rains and years shall I still hurry down wet streets—middle-aged, and then, perhaps, very old? And on what errands?

Asking myself this cheerless question I fade from your vision, Reader, into the distance, sloping my umbrella against the wind.

A Free Man's Worship[1]

TO DR. FAUSTUS in his study Mephistopheles told the history of the Creation, saying:

"The endless praises of the choirs of angels had begun to grow wearisome; for, after all, did he not deserve their praise? Had he not given them endless joy? Would it not be more amusing to obtain undeserved praise, to be worshipped by

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[1] from Bertrand Russell's *Mysticism and Logic.* Reprinted by permission of the author and of the publishers, W. W. Norton and Co., Inc.

beings whom he tortured? He smiled inwardly, and resolved that the great drama should be performed.

"For countless ages the hot nebula whirled aimlessly through space. At length it began to take shape, the central mass threw off planets, the planets cooled, boiling seas and burning mountains heaved and tossed, from black masses of cloud hot sheets of rain deluged the barely solid crust. And now the first germ of life grew in the depths of the ocean, and developed rapidly in the fructifying warmth into vast forest trees, huge ferns springing from the damp mould, sea monsters breeding, fighting, devouring, and passing away. And from the monsters, as the play unfolded itself, Man was born, with the power of thought, the knowledge of good and evil, and the cruel thirst for worship. And Man saw that all is passing in this mad, monstrous world, that all is struggling to snatch, at any cost, a few brief moments of life before Death's inexorable decree. And Man said: 'There is a hidden purpose, could we but fathom it, and the purpose is good; for we must reverence something, and in the visible world there is nothing worthy of reverence.' And Man stood aside from the struggle, resolving that God intended harmony to come out of chaos by human efforts. And when he followed the instincts which God had transmitted to him from his ancestry of beasts of prey, he called it Sin, and asked God to forgive him. But he doubted whether he could be justly forgiven, until he invented a divine Plan by which God's wrath was to have been appeased. And seeing the present was bad, he made it yet worse, that thereby the future might be better. And he gave God thanks for the strength that enabled him to forego even the joys that were possible. And God smiled; and when he saw that Man had become perfect in renunciation and worship, he sent another sun through the sky, which crashed into Man's sun; and all returned again to nebula.

" 'Yes,' he murmured, 'it was a good play; I will have it performed again.' "

Such, in outline, but even more purposeless, more void of meaning, is the world which Science presents for our belief. Amid such a world, if anywhere, our ideals henceforward must find a home. That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the débris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built.

How, in such an alien and inhuman world, can so powerless a creature as Man preserve his aspirations untarnished? A strange mystery it is that Nature, omnipotent but blind, in the revolutions of her secular hurryings through the abysses of space, has brought forth at last a child, subject still to her power, but gifted with sight, with knowledge of good and evil, with the capacity of judging all the works of his unthinking Mother. In spite of Death, the mark and seal of the parental control, Man is yet free, during his brief years, to examine, to criticise, to know, and in imagination to create. To him alone, in the world with which he is acquainted, this freedom belongs; and in this lies his superiority to the resistless forces that control his outward life.

The savage, like ourselves, feels the oppression of his im-

potence before the powers of Nature; but having in himself nothing that he respects more than Power, he is willing to prostrate himself before his gods, without inquiring whether they are worthy of his worship. Pathetic and very terrible is the long history of cruelty and torture, of degradation and human sacrifice, endured in the hope of placating the jealous gods: surely, the trembling believer thinks, when what is most precious has been freely given, their lust for blood must be appeased, and more will not be required. The religion of Moloch—as such creeds may be generically called—is in essence the cringing submission of the slave, who dares not, even in his heart, allow the thought that his master deserves no adulation. Since the independence of ideals is not yet acknowledged, Power may be freely worshipped, and receive an unlimited respect, despite its wanton infliction of pain.

But gradually, as morality grows bolder, the claim of the ideal world begins to be felt; and worship, if it is not to cease, must be given to gods of another kind than those created by the savage. Some, though they feel the demands of the ideal, will still consciously reject them, still urging that naked Power is worthy of worship. Such is the attitude inculcated in God's answer to Job out of the whirlwind: the divine power and knowledge are paraded, but of the divine goodness there is no hint. Such also is the attitude of those who, in our own day, base their morality upon the struggle for survival, maintaining that the survivors are necessarily the fittest. But others, not content with an answer so repugnant to the moral sense, will adopt the position which we have become accustomed to regard as specially religious, maintaining that, in some hidden manner, the world of fact is really harmonious with the world of ideals. Thus Man creates God, all-powerful and all-good, the mystic unity of what is and what should be.

But the world of fact, after all, is not good; and, in submitting our judgment to it, there is an element of slavishness

from which our thoughts must be purged. For in all things it is well to exalt the dignity of Man, by freeing him, as far as possible, from the tyranny of non-human Power. When we have realised that Power is largely bad, that man, with his knowledge of good and evil, is but a helpless atom in a world which has no such knowledge, the choice is again presented to us: Shall we worship Force, or shall we worship Goodness? Shall our God exist and be evil, or shall he be recognised as the creation of our own conscience?

The answer to this question is very momentous, and affects profoundly our whole morality. The worship of Force, to which Carlyle and Nietzsche and the creed of Militarism have accustomed us, is the result of failure to maintain our own ideals against a hostile universe: it is itself a prostrate submission to evil, a sacrifice of our best to Moloch. If strength indeed is to be respected, let us respect rather the strength of those who refuse that false "recognition of facts" which fails to recognise that facts are often bad. Let us admit that, in the world we know, there are many things that would be better otherwise, and that the ideals to which we do and must adhere are not realised in the realm of matter. Let us preserve our respect for truth, for beauty, for the ideal of perfection which life does not permit us to attain, though none of these things meet with the approval of the unconscious universe. If Power is bad, as it seems to be, let us reject it from our hearts. In this lies Man's true freedom: in determination to worship only the God created by our own love of the good, to respect only the heaven which inspires the insight of our best moments. In action, in desire, we must submit perpetually to the tyranny of outside forces; but in thought, in aspiration, we are free, free from our fellow-men, free from the petty planet on which our bodies impotently crawl, free even, while we live, from the tyranny of death. Let us learn, then, that energy of faith

which enables us to live constantly in the vision of the good; and let us descend, in action, into the world of fact, with that vision always before us.

When first the opposition of fact and ideal grows fully visible, a spirit of fiery revolt, of fierce hatred of the gods, seems necessary to the assertion of freedom. To defy with Promethean constancy a hostile universe, to keep its evil always in view, always actively hated, to refuse no pain that the malice of Power can invent, appears to be the duty of all who will not bow before the inevitable. But indignation is still a bondage, for it compels our thoughts to be occupied with an evil world; and in the fierceness of desire from which rebellion springs there is a kind of self-assertion which it is necessary for the wise to overcome. Indignation is a submission of our thoughts, but not of our desires; the Stoic freedom in which wisdom consists is found in the submission of our desires, but not of our thoughts. From the submission of our desires springs the virtue of resignation; from the freedom of our thoughts springs the whole world of art and philosophy, and the vision of beauty by which, at last, we half reconquer the reluctant world. But the vision of beauty is possible only to unfettered contemplation, to thoughts not weighted by the load of eager wishes; and thus Freedom comes only to those who no longer ask of life that it shall yield them any of those personal goods that are subject to the mutations of Time.

Although the necessity of renunciation is evidence of the existence of evil, yet Christianity, in preaching it, has shown a wisdom exceeding that of the Promethean philosophy of rebellion. It must be admitted that, of the things we desire, some, though they prove impossible, are yet real goods; others, however, as ardently longed for, do not form part of a fully purified ideal. The belief that what must be renounced is bad, though sometimes false, is far less often false than untamed

passion supposes; and the creed of religion, by providing a reason for proving that it is never false, has been the means of purifying our hopes by the discovery of many austere truths.

But there is in resignation a further good element: even real goods, when they are unattainable, ought not to be fretfully desired. To every man comes, sooner or later, the great renunciation. For the young, there is nothing unattainable; a good thing desired with the whole force of a passionate will, and yet impossible, is to them not credible. Yet, by death, by illness, by poverty, or by the voice of duty, we must learn, each one of us, that the world was not made for us, and that, however beautiful may be the things we crave, Fate may nevertheless forbid them. It is the part of courage, when misfortune comes, to bear without repining the ruin of our hopes, to turn away our thoughts from vain regrets. This degree of submission to Power is not only just and right: it is the very gate of wisdom.

But passive renunciation is not the whole of wisdom; for not by renunciation alone can we build a temple for the worship of our own ideals. Haunting foreshadowings of the temple appear in the realm of imagination, in music, in architecture, in the untroubled kingdom of reason, and in the golden sunset magic of lyrics, where beauty shines and glows, remote from the touch of sorrow, remote from the fear of change, remote from the failures and disenchantments of the world of fact. In the contemplation of these things the vision of heaven will shape itself in our hearts, giving at once a touchstone to judge the world about us, and an inspiration by which to fashion to our needs whatever is not incapable of serving as a stone in the sacred temple.

Except for those rare spirits that are born without sin, there is a cavern of darkness to be traversed before that temple can be entered. The gate of the cavern is despair, and its floor is paved with the gravestones of abandoned hopes. There Self

must die; there the eagerness, the greed of untamed desire must be slain, for only so can the soul be freed from the empire of Fate. But out of the cavern the Gate of Renunciation leads again to the daylight of wisdom, by whose radiance a new insight, a new joy, a new tenderness, shine forth to gladden the pilgrim's heart.

When, without the bitterness of impotent rebellion, we have learnt both to resign ourselves to the outward rule of Fate and to recognise that the non-human world is unworthy of our worship, it becomes possible at last so to transform and refashion the unconscious universe, so to transmute it in the crucible of imagination, that a new image of shining gold replaces the old idol of clay. In all the multiform facts of the world—in the visual shapes of trees and mountains and clouds, in the events of the life of man, even in the very omnipotence of Death—the insight of creative idealism can find the reflection of a beauty which its own thoughts first made. In this way mind asserts its subtle mastery over the thoughtless forces of Nature. The more evil the material with which it deals, the more thwarting to untrained desire, the greater is its achievement in inducing the reluctant rock to yield up its hidden treasures, the prouder its victory in compelling the opposing forces to swell the pageant of its triumph. Of all the arts, Tragedy is the proudest, the most triumphant; for it builds its shining citadel in the very centre of the enemy's country, on the very summit of his highest mountain; from its impregnable watch-towers, his camps and arsenals, his columns and forts, are all revealed; within its walls the free life continues, while the legions of Death and Pain and Despair, and all the servile captains of tyrant Fate, afford the burghers of that dauntless city new spectacles of beauty. Happy those sacred ramparts, thrice happy the dwellers on that all-seeing eminence. Honour to those brave warriors who, through countless ages of warfare, have preserved for us the priceless heritage of liberty, and have

kept undefiled by sacrilegious invaders the home of the unsubdued.

But the beauty of Tragedy does but make visible a quality which, in more or less obvious shapes, is present always and everywhere in life. In the spectacle of Death, in the endurance of intolerable pain, and in the irrevocableness of a vanished past, there is a sacredness, an overpowering awe, a feeling of the vastness, the depth, the inexhaustible mystery of existence, in which, as by some strange marriage of pain, the sufferer is bound to the world by bonds of sorrow. In these moments of insight, we lose all eagerness of temporary desire, all struggling and striving for petty ends, all care for the little trivial things that, to a superficial view, make up the common life of day by day; we see, surrounding the narrow raft illumined by the flickering light of human comradeship, the dark ocean on whose rolling waves we toss for a brief hour; from the great night without, a chill blast breaks in upon our refuge; all the loneliness of humanity amid hostile forces is concentrated upon the individual soul, which must struggle alone, with what of courage it can command, against the whole weight of a universe that cares nothing for its hopes and fears. Victory, in this struggle with the powers of darkness, is the true baptism into the glorious company of heroes, the true initiation into the overmastering beauty of human existence. From that awful encounter of the soul with the outer world, renunciation, wisdom, and charity are born; and with their birth a new life begins. To take into the inmost shrine of the soul the irresistible forces whose puppets we seem to be—Death and change, the irrevocableness of the past, and the powerlessness of man before the blind hurry of the universe from vanity to vanity—to feel these things and know them is to conquer them.

This is the reason why the Past has such magical power. The beauty of its motionless and silent pictures is like the enchanted purity of late autumn, when the leaves, though one

breath would make them fall, still glow against the sky in golden glory. The Past does not change or strive; like Duncan, after life's fitful fever it sleeps well; what was eager and grasping, what was petty and transitory, has faded away, the things that were beautiful and eternal shine out of it like stars in the night. Its beauty, to a soul not worthy of it, is unendurable; but to a soul which has conquered Fate it is the key of religion.

The life of Man, viewed outwardly, is but a small thing in comparison with the forces of Nature. The slave is doomed to worship Time and Fate and Death, because they are greater than anything he finds in himself, and because all his thoughts are of things which they devour. But, great as they are, to think of them greatly, to feel their passionless splendour, is greater still. And such thought makes us free men; we no longer bow before the inevitable in Oriental subjection, but we absorb it, and make it a part of ourselves. To abandon the struggle for private happiness, to expel all eagerness of temporary desire, to burn with passion for eternal things—this is emancipation, and this is the free man's worship. And this liberation is effected by a contemplation of Fate; for Fate itself is subdued by the mind which leaves nothing to be purged by the purifying fire of Time.

United with his fellow-men by the strongest of all ties, the tie of a common doom, the free man finds that a new vision is with him always, shedding over every daily task the light of love. The life of Man is a long march through the night, surrounded by invisible foes, tortured by weariness and pain, towards a goal that few can hope to reach, and where none may tarry long. One by one, as they march, our comrades vanish from our sight, seized by the silent orders of omnipotent Death. Very brief is the time in which we can help them, in which their happiness or misery is decided. Be it ours to shed sunshine on their path, to lighten their sorrows by the balm of sympa-

thy, to give them the pure joy of a never-tiring affection, to strengthen failing courage, to instil faith in hours of despair. Let us not weigh in grudging scales their merits and demerits, but let us think only of their need—of the sorrows, the difficulties, perhaps the blindnesses, that make the misery of their lives; let us remember that they are fellow-sufferers in the same darkness, actors in the same tragedy with ourselves. And so, when their day is over, when their good and their evil have become eternal by the immortality of the past, be it ours to feel that, where they suffered, where they failed, no deed of ours was the cause; but wherever a spark of the divine fire kindled in their hearts, we were ready with encouragement, with sympathy, with brave words in which high courage glowed.

Brief and powerless is Man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for Man, condemned to-day to lose his dearest, to morrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day; disdaining the coward terrors of the slave of Fate, to worship at the shrine that his own hands have built; undismayed by the empire of chance, to preserve a mind free from the wanton tyranny that rules his outward life; proudly defiant of the irresistible forces that tolerate, for a moment, his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideals have fashioned despite the trampling march of unconscious power.

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